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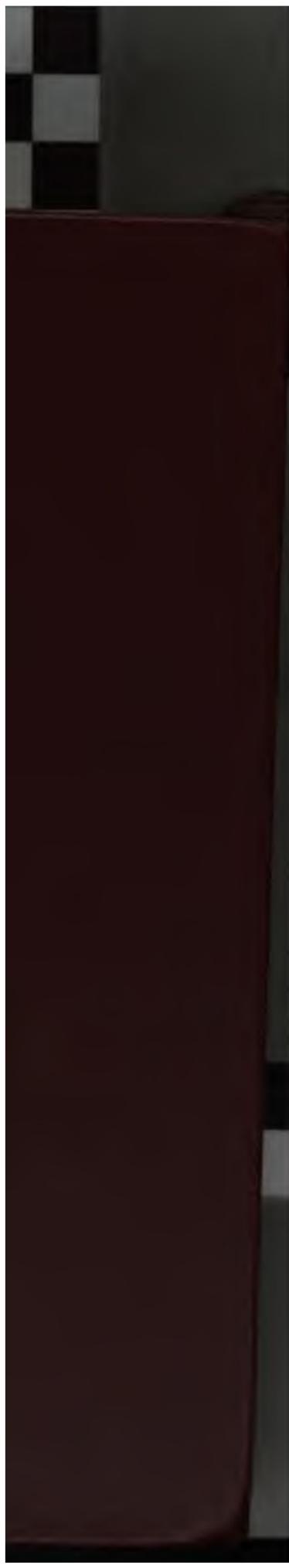
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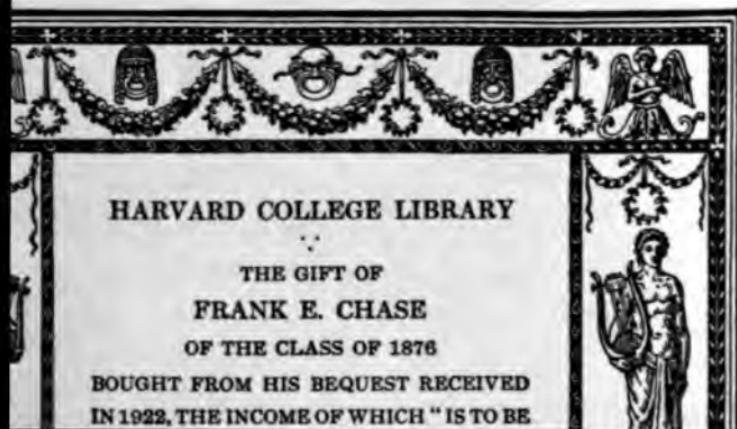
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***SHAKSPEARE***  
***AND***  
***THE BIBLE.***



'I commend my Soul into the hands of God, my Creator ;  
hoping and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus  
Christ, my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting ;  
and my Body to the earth, whereof that is made.'

SHAKSPEARE'S WILL.

o

ON

\ SHAKSPEARE'S KNOWLEDGE  
AND USE, OF THE BIBLE,

BY

CHARLES WORDSWORTH, D.C.L.  
BISHOP OF ST. ANDREWS.

'I will preach to thee; mark me!'—KING LEAR.

'Meliùs Chrysippo et Crantore.'—HORACE.

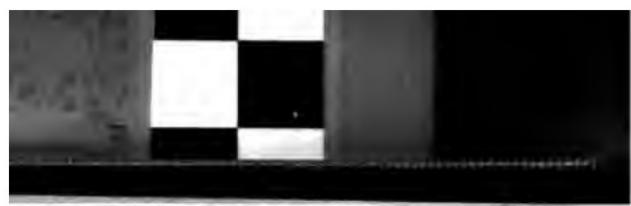
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1864.

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NEW-STREET SQUARE



**TO**

**MY CHILDREN:**

IN THE HOPE AND WITH THE AIM

THAT THEY MAY GROW UP READERS AND LOVERS

**OF**

**SHAKSPEARE**

**AS**

THE BOOK OF MAN;

BUT, STILL MORE, READERS AND LOVERS

**OF**

**THE BIBLE**

**AS**

THE WORD OF GOD.



William Shakespeare



## PREFACE.

---

**I** am not aware that the attempt made in this small volume has been anticipated in any other. Even the notes of critics upon Shakspeare, superfluously full in pointing out his obligations, real or supposed, to secular authors, are singularly meagre in the references which they make to the Holy Scriptures. And yet how abundant is the room for such reference, and how much it may conduce to the mutual illustration of the two books, which as Christians and as Britons we should value most, will be seen, I trust, upon every page of the Second Part of the following dissertation.

With regard to the First and very much shorter Part, I must confess that it scarcely comes within the title and proper scope of my design; and that it will be found to contain little which can be new or interesting to older and more advanced readers;



who may, therefore, if they think fit, pass it over : but to the young, for whom the volume is principally intended, I trust it may prove useful ; and I was unwilling to miss the opportunity of giving *them* information which may help to improve their knowledge of their own language and at the same time enable them to understand better, and so to read with greater profit and pleasure, both their Bible and their Shakspeare—but especially the former.

In selecting the quotations which will be found in the following pages, and in arranging them systematically, no use has been made of any previous compilation : I have trusted solely to my own complete perusal and study of our great poet, with the particular objects which I have mentioned constantly in view, and with the additional motive of doing him a justice, which he has not yet fully received, ever present to my mind. On some accounts, indeed, I could have wished that my labours had been less independent ; but such as they are, they are presented to the reader, in the hope that they may give him some portion of the pleasure which I have derived from them myself. In the meantime, I am fully conscious that the available material for both Parts of the work is far from being exhausted. As

regards the latter Part, some handfuls at least, I doubt not, still remain to be gleaned in the same extensive field; while the former Part contains little more than a specimen of the ore which the same mine, if thoroughly worked, might be made to produce.

‘The Bible and Shakspeare,’ said one of the best and most esteemed prelates that ever sat upon the English bench—Dr. John Sharp, in the reign of Queen Anne—‘The Bible and Shakspeare have made me Archbishop of York.’ The Shakspeare of Greek Comedy—Aristophanes—is well known to have been a favourite author of the most celebrated preacher of the ancient church, S. John Chrysostom, some time patriarch of Constantinople. Under the shelter of high and venerated authorities such as these the present writer ventures to hope he may escape censure for allowing his name to appear upon the title-page of this volume. He had intended to put it forth anonymously, but his intention has been overruled by the publishers.





## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

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**T**HE speedy call for a second edition of this book has encouraged me to revise the whole; and in so doing, I have introduced some additions with the view of making it more complete, and, consequently, as I would hope, less unworthy of public favour.

Since the publication of the former edition, I have discovered that two works more or less similar in design to the Second Part of my undertaking had previously appeared; and a third was published, I believe, almost simultaneously with it. I think it due to the authors of those works to make this statement, and to add that in the fruit of their labours, which I have examined with much interest, I have been pleased to find still more thorough confirmation of the conclusion at which I had myself independently arrived.

Among the remarks offered, generally in the kindest spirit, upon this volume, more than one of my critics would seem to have forgotten, or misconceived, the purpose of its First Part. I would, therefore, repeat that the proof of Shakspeare's *knowledge and use of the Bible* is not supposed to lie in his employing words and phrases commonly current at the time in which he lived, and still less (for chronological reasons) in his use of words and phrases peculiar to the revised Translation of the Scriptures, published in 1611. And the design of that First Part is simply to contribute to the verbal illustration of the Bible from the language of Shakspeare, and to the verbal illustration of Shakspeare from our translation of the Bible.

*August 1864.*





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ON

## SHAKSPEARE'S KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF THE BIBLE.



### *GENERAL INTRODUCTION.*

**M**UCH has been said and written on the learning of Shakspeare. How far the greatest genius of modern times was indebted to the storehouse of antiquity; whether or no he was altogether

Untutored in the lore of Greece or Rome,

is a question which a hundred years ago was agitated among men of letters with intense interest. But neither in the course of that controversy, nor at any other time, has the enquiry, I believe, been raised to which I purpose in these pages to offer a reply; viz., how far Shakspeare was conversant with Holy Scripture, and whether or no he made use of his knowledge of the Bible to guide and assist him in the production of his immortal works. When I

say that this enquiry is a new one, I do not mean that our poet's acquaintance with Scripture has altogether escaped the notice of every one of his numerous commentators; for such is not the case: \* and had it been so, my undertaking might well be suspected of too great and too presumptuous a singularity to warrant an expectation of its usefulness and sobriety. All I would imply is that Shakspeare has not yet received the credit, which I think I shall be able to prove that he deserves, of having been, in a more than ordinary degree, a diligent and a devout reader of the Word of God; and that he has turned this reading to far more and far better account than any of his critics would seem to have suspected, or at all events has yet attempted to point out. His marvellous knowledge of the Book of Nature is admitted on all hands: his knowledge of the Book of Grace, though far less noticed, will be found, I believe, to have been scarcely less remarkable. His works have been called 'a secular Bible:' my object is to show that while they are this, they are also *something more*, being saturated with Divine Wisdom, such as could have been derived only from the very Bible itself.

\* For instance, I observe in Mr. Singer's edition of 1826 the following note:—'It has been remarked that Shakspeare was habitually conversant with his Bible.'—Vol. v. p. 464. The allusion is, perhaps, to the following remark of Mr. Capel Lloft, in his *Aphorisms from Shakspeare*, published in 1812:—'He (Shakspeare) had deeply imbibed the Scriptures.' *Introd.* p. xii.

And I enter upon my task with keener interest and heartier zeal upon two accounts; first, because I trust I shall be paying a dutious service to the memory of this great man, whom every Briton should delight to honour, by removing an imputation which has been (I am persuaded) hastily and inconsiderately cast upon him, as though he had, in some instances, designed to treat the Inspired Word with profaneness ;\* and secondly, because, if it shall appear (as I doubt not it will) that a genius so incomparable was content to study, and not unfrequently to draw his inspiration from the pages of Holy Scripture, submitting his reason to the mysterious doctrines which it reveals, and his conscience to the moral lessons which it prescribes ; it may be hoped that no one of my readers will consider it beneath him to follow an example, set by an authority so highly, so justly, and so universally esteemed.

‘He was indeed *honest*,’ says his friend Ben Jonson, ‘and of an open and free nature.’† Upon such unquestionable testimony, it is pleasant to be permitted to think of our greatest poet, as one ‘who in an *honest* and good heart, having heard the Word, kept it, and brought forth fruit with patience.’ That he brought forth fruit—immortal fruit—to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind, no one

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\* See Mr. Boswell’s Advertisement to the Variorum edition of *Shakspeare*, 1821, p. 8 ; and compare below p. 51.

† *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 449.

can deny. That he had occasion for much patience in surmounting, as he did surmount, the difficulties of the earlier part of his career, both as an actor and a writer for the stage, is equally certain. Nor is there any conflicting record to prevent us from believing that the tenor of his life, especially in his later years, was in conformity with the confession of his death as exhibited in his will;\* unless indeed we are to admit certain passages in his sonnets as evidence against himself, which if they prove him at one time to have yielded to the temptations with which he was beset, prove him also to have possessed afterwards the spirit of a true penitent. Of his personal history, all that is now known may be soon told. He was born in April,† 1564, at Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, the eldest son‡ of eight children, his father, John Shakspeare, being a glover of that town; and he died at his native place (whither he had retired in comfortable circumstances some years before) on the 23rd of April, 1616, when he was only in his fifty-third year. He married very young, before

\* On the contrary, see two other contemporaneous testimonies to his ‘honest’ character in Malone’s *Life*, p. 280, *sq.*, and p. 284. He was also known among his contemporaries as ‘the gentle Shakespeare.’ See the Author’s *Sermon preached at Stratford*, p. 26.

† The precise day of his birth is uncertain, see Mr. Dyce’s *Life*, p. 24, *sq.* He was baptized at Stratford, on April 26. His mother’s name was Mary, of the family of Arden.

‡ Two daughters had been born before him.

he was nineteen, Anne Hathaway, a yeoman's daughter, eight years older than himself, by whom he had two daughters and one son ; and who survived him seven years ; dying in 1623, at the age of sixty-seven. In that same year appeared the first edition of his collected plays, thirty-six in number, which are generally allowed to be genuine ; though not more than fourteen (or sixteen, including *Titus Andronicus* and *Pericles Prince of Tyre*) had been published in his lifetime. And there seems no reason to doubt that a great portion of what he wrote was composed, if not under the actual pressure of want, yet in a condition of life very unfavourable to carefulness and maturity of composition.

Whatever blemishes there may have been in the character of the first Scottish sovereign who sat upon the throne of England, it is only just to bear in mind that we owe to him, under the good Providence of God, that inestimable work, the translation of the Bible which we all use ; and moreover that to him we owe also the satisfaction which we must all feel when we learn that the best of uninspired writers was not without royal encouragement. Detract what we may from the merit of King James, on the score of pedantry, or of disingenuousness, the facts will remain, which, considering the subject I have now in hand, I rejoice to mention in his praise, and to interweave, as among the

brightest ornaments of his crown—that he wrote to William Shakspeare a letter of commendation with his own hand,\* and that he gave ‘special command’ for the publication of the Scriptures in the revised and improved form, which Shakspeare and his contemporaries were the first to read.

Our great poet, then, and our translators of the Bible lived and flourished at the same time, and under the same reign. This is an interesting fact in the enquiry upon which we are about to enter, and suggests the propriety of dividing it into two parts. That is, we may not only seek to illustrate the subject-matter of the Bible by comparison with passages in Shakspeare which prove his knowledge and study of the Scriptures; but we may also explain the sacred text by parallels which Shakspeare will afford us of the use of words and phrases commonly current at that time, but which have since undergone a change of meaning or become altogether obsolete. And upon this branch of the subject it will be natural to enter first.

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\* See Variorum Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 467, and vol. ii. p. 481. Our poet also received marks of favour from Queen Elizabeth. See Drake's *Shakspeare and his Times*, vol. ii. p. 590. Dyce's *Life*, p. 78.



## PART I.



TRINITY CHURCH, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.



## CHAPTER I.

*Of noticeable Forms of Speech found in the English Bible  
and in Shakspeare.*

**I**N order to deal fairly with this former part of our investigation, it is necessary to remark, in the first instance, that, while the *whole contents* and *general language* of the Bible would be known to our poet from translations previously in use, in regard to particular *words* and *modes of speech*, it is probable that our translators of 1611 owed to Shakspeare as much as, or rather far more than, he owed to them. According to the chronological order of our poet's plays, as determined by Mr. Malone, only two of them were written *after* 1611; all the rest having been composed in the interval between that year and 1591. And the Bibles most commonly used during that period were either Parker's, called also the Bishops' Bible, of 1568, required to be read in churches; or various reprints of the Genevan Bible of 1560, with short marginal notes, and much used in private families (a translation which was due in part to John Knox,

while resident abroad); or the version by the Roman Catholics of the New Testament, published at Rheims in 1582, and of the whole Bible at Douay in 1609.

With this explanation, we may now proceed to the portion of our task which lies first before us, taking up whatever is noticeable in the use of the several parts of speech in their natural order.

1. To begin then with the use of the *Articles*, *definite and indefinite*.

In Acts xxii. 4, we read, as spoken by S. Paul, ‘I persecuted this way unto *the death*.’ There is no article in the original Greek, and yet in English it has been retained from the translation of Wickliff in 1380 to the present hour. The apostle does not mean any particular death, and therefore, as Bp. Lowth observed a century ago, in his *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, p. 31, the definite article is improperly used in our version of the text. The same inaccuracy occurs also in 2 Chron. xxxii. 24. ‘In those days Hezekiah was sick *to the death*,’ where there is no article in the Septuagint. And again in Revelation xii. 11. ‘They loved not their lives unto *the death*’ ( $\alpha\chiρι\theta\alpha\varpi\tauου$ ), which has come down not from Wickliff, like the passage in the Acts, but from Tyndale, 1534. The expression which we meet with in S. Matt. xv. 4, and S. Mark vii. 10, and which is derived to us from Cranmer’s Translation of 1539, ‘He that curseth father or mother let him *die the death*,’ is to be

traced no doubt to the same origin, and involves a still further deviation from the sense of the original, which is literally ‘let him die by death.’ (*θανάτῳ τελευτάτῳ*), and means, according to a Hebrew idiom, ‘Let him *certainly* die.’ And so we read in Levit. xx. 9, where the Septuagint has the same Greek words, ‘he shall *surely* be put to death.’ See also Ecclesiasticus xiv. 17. ‘The covenant from the beginning is, *Thou shalt die the death.*’ But now to turn to Shakspeare. He has several times used the expression, ‘to die the death;’ e.g. in *Measure for Measure*, Act ii. Sc. 4; in *Cymbeline*, Act iv. Sc. 2, and again in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act i. Sc. 1, where in reply to Hermia’s question what is to befall her in case she refuses to marry Demetrius, Theseus says:—

Either to *die the death*, or to abjure  
For ever the society of man.

There can be little doubt that our poet took the phrase (as Steevens\* observes) from the Bible; but whether he attached the right meaning to it we cannot tell. Dr. Johnson, with less accuracy than might have been expected from him, remarks that ‘this seems to be a solemn phrase for *death inflicted by law.*’ The simple form of expression, as first cited from the Acts, ‘the death,’ is to be found frequently in Chaucer, e.g.

*The deeth he feeleth through his herte smite.*

*Cant. Tales, v. 1222.*

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\* Vol. ix. p. 92.

Tyrwhitt has suggested that it seems to have been originally a mistaken translation of the French *la mort*. Shakspeare has it in *King Richard II.* :—

And again in *King Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 1, 'Where they feared *the death*, they have borne life away.' Altogether the usage is a curious one.

2. The use of the *Indefinite Article* prefixed to plural substantives, especially nouns of number, is also one which admits of similar illustration. In S. Luke ix. 28, we read, 'It came to pass about an eight days after these sayings.' The questionable expression '*an eight days*' has been retained from Tyndale's translation in 1534. In like manner we find in the Apocryphal Book, 1 Macc. iv. 15, 'There were slain of them upon *a three thousand* men.' The same use of the indefinite article is to be met with more than once in Shakspeare. Thus in *King Richard III.* Act iii. Sc. 7, Buckingham describes Lady Grey, afterwards married to King Edward IV., as

A care-crazed mother to *a many* sons.

See also *Merchant of Venice*, Act iii. Sc. 5, 'a many fools.'

3. To pass on from the Article to the *Noun*. I am not aware that our translators of the Bible afford any example of an anomaly, or, to speak more

plainly, a false concord, not unfrequent in Shakspeare,\* whereby plural substantives are constructed as if singular, and vice versa, except in the single case of the word ‘means,’ which, partly perhaps on account of the biblical authority in its favour, is so employed to the present day. ‘We certify the king,’ write the adversaries of the Jews in the Book of Ezra iv. 16, ‘that if this city be builded again... by *this means* thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.’ Johnson, under the word ‘mean,’ remarks, ‘It is often used in the plural, and by some not very grammatically with an adjective singular, as *by this means*.’ Shakspeare seems to use the plural of this word indifferently both as singular and plural. In like manner the two nouns of similar meaning, ‘tidings’ and ‘news,’ are used by our poet as of both numbers. Thus we find in him, ‘It is *a* tidings,’ and ‘*this* tidings,’ as well as ‘*these* tidings;’ also, ‘*This* news is mortal,’ and ‘*These* news are everywhere.’ In the Bible we have ‘these news,’ 1 Kings i. title, and ‘so is good news,’ Prov. xxv. 25; but ‘tidings’ occurs only as plural, e. g. ‘these glad tidings,’ Luke i. 19.

4. The formation of our genitive case, originally by the addition of the syllable ‘is,’ as ‘Godis

\* As ‘our remedies . . . lies’ in *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 3; ‘manners urges,’ in *King Lear*, v. 3; ‘scope . . . allow,’ in *Hamlet*, i. 2. See the critics upon *Cymbeline*, ii. 3.—Vol. xiii. p. 70, sq.

grace,' afterwards shortened into the letter 's' with an apostrophe, as 'God's grace,' has led to a corruption with which our printers seem most unwilling to part, I mean the transformation of 'is' into 'his.' Thus in Gen. xvii. title, 'Abram *his* name' and 'Sarah *her* name;' Deut. x. title, 'Moses *his* suit;' S. Mark v. title, 'Jairus *his* daughter,' *Ibid.* x. title, 'Bartimæus *his* sight.' And it is a curious instance of the arbitrariness or incomplete accuracy which is apt to prevail in such matters, that while these three examples (and perhaps others) of the corruption in question are allowed still to remain in our Bible, two other examples which Bishop Lowth pointed out, viz. 'Asa *his* heart,' 1 Kings xv. 14, and 'Mordecai *his* matters,' Esth. iii. 4, have been set right. The same usage occurs at the end of the *Prayer for all conditions of men* in the Prayer Book;—' and this we beg for Jesus Christ *His* sake.' In the Variorum Shakspeare I have noticed six examples; all, except one, after words ending in *s*: three in *King Henry VI. 1st Part*, one in *King Henry V.*, and one in *Troilus and Cressida*. It is not a little remarkable that so great a master of the English language as Addison, and at a date so late as 1711, should have been under the impression that 'his' in these cases is correct, and intended to represent the pronoun. See *Spectator*, No. 135. If this were so, how could we account for our genitives plural, as 'children's bread,' and genitives singular of females or feminine

names, as ‘Persia’s king?’ See Lowth’s *Grammar*, p. 42, note; who further observes that ‘the direct derivation of this case from the Saxon genitive is sufficient of itself to decide the matter.’ In one of the three examples in *King Henry VI.*, Bowdler has very improperly altered the text ‘France *his* sword’ into ‘France’s sword,’ not considering, probably, that France is there to be understood not of the country, but of the French king. Besides, if the alteration is to be made in one instance, it should be made in all.

5. Proceeding to the *Pronouns*, I notice first the elliptic use, still common in many phrases, of the dative case of the personal pronouns; e. g. 'me,' 'us,' instead of 'for me,' 'for us.' Thus in 2 Sam. xix. 26, 'I will saddle *me* an ass,' i. e. for myself; where the idiom in question represents the force of the middle verb in Greek. So also in Deut. x. 1. 'Make *thee* an ark;' in Josh. xxii. 26, 'Let us now prepare to build *us* an altar;' and *ibid.* 16, 'Ye have builded *you* an altar;' in Judges vi. 2, 'The children of Israel made *them* the dens which are in the mountains.' Again, where the notion of the verb is not reflexive: In 1 Kings xiii. 13, 'He said unto his sons, Saddle *me* the ass. So they saddled *him* the ass; and he rode thereon.' In like manner, Shylock in the *Merchant of Venice* :—

Go with me to a notary ; seal *me* there  
Your single bond.                                   Act i. Sc. 3.

And Pandulf, in *King John*,\* Act iii. Sc. 4, ‘John lays *you* plots.’ But our poet has examples of the idiom still more peculiar. Thus Shylock again in the speech quoted below, p. 65 :—

The skilful shepherd peeled *me* certain wands,

The ambiguity to which such a manner of speaking may give rise, has been taken advantage of in the humorous scene between Petruchio and his servant Grumio at the door of Hortensio, in *Taming of the Shrew* :—

Petruchio. Here, sirrah Grumio; knock, I say.

Grumio. Knock, sir? Whom should I knock? Is there any man has rebused your worship?

Petruchio. Villain, I say, knock *me* here soundly.

Grumio. Knock *you* here, sir? Why, what am I, sir, that I should knock *you* here, sir?

Petruchio. Villain, I say, knock *me* at this gate,  
And rap *me* well, or I'll knock your knave's pate. Act i. Sc. 2.

6. Formerly ‘it,’ the neuter pronoun of the third person, besides borrowing the form ‘thereof’ to supply the possessive case, was indebted for its declension to the pronouns masculine and feminine of the same person, and instead of *its*,† *his* and

\* See the elegant volume upon *Shakspeare and his Birthplace*, by Mr. Wise, who gives other instances, and speaks of it as an idiom still current in Warwickshire, p. 112, sq.

† Dean Alford, in his *Plea for the Queen's English*, informs us that ‘*its*’ never occurs in the English version of the Bible, and that it is said only to occur three times in *Shakspeare*, and once in *Paradise Lost*. See *Good Words for 1863*, p. 192.



*in the Bible and in Shakspeare.* 17

hers were used with reference to a thing spoken of. Thus in Joshua iv. 18, 'The waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all *his* banks, as they did before.' In S. Matthew xxvi. 52, 'Put up thy sword again into *his* place.' In Haggai ii. 3, 'Who is left among you that saw this house in *her* first glory?' These examples\* are sufficient to prove that our poet was guilty of no vulgarity, as then considered, when he put into the mouth of Cæsar the following words addressed to Antony :—

Let me lament

That thou, my brother, my competitor,  
The arm of mine own body, and the heart  
Where mine *bis* thoughts did kindle—

*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act v. Sc. 1.

But it is curious that our translator of the Apocryphal Book of *Ecclesiasticus* should have so far differed at once from Shakspeare, and from himself, as to make 'the heart' not masculine, but first feminine and then neuter, as he does in xxii. 19, 'He that pricketh the heart maketh *it* to show *her* knowledge.' We find another example in the same play, where Euphronius says to Cæsar :—

Such as I am, I come from Antony:  
I was of late as petty to his ends,  
As is the morn dew on the myrtle leaf  
To *bis* grand sea.

Act iii. Sc. 10.

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\* See also Exod. xxxvii. 17; Acts xii. 10; Rev. xxii. 2, quoted by Dean Alford. Gen. i. 11; Ps. liv. 7, quoted in Mr. Booker's *Glossary*.

The explanation of Steevens that by 'his' we are to understand 'its,' is, I believe, the true one.

7. W.: know that the neuter of the relative pronoun, *which*, was formerly used as masculine, or feminine; as in 'Our Father *which* art in heaven,' where we should now say 'who.' Again, in Gen. xviii. 27, 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, *which* am but dust and ashes.' In Matt. xxvii. 55, 56, we have 'which' for both 'who' and 'whom':—'And many women were there beholding afar off, *which* followed Jesus from Galilee ministering unto Him, among *which* was Mary Magdalene,' &c. Both usages are to be met with in Shakspeare. Thus in the *Tempest*, Act iii. Sc. 1, Ferdinand says, 'The mistress *which* I serve,' and in *King Richard III*. Gloster, the future king, to Prince Edward:—

Those uncles *which* you want, were dangerous.

Act iii. Sc. 1.

On the other hand we find in Shakspeare, though not, so far as I have noted, in our translation of the Bible, the use of 'who' for 'which:' as in the *Tempest*, Act i. Sc. 2:—

A brave vessel,  
*Who* had, no doubt, some noble creatures in her.

And again in the same play, Act iii. Sc. 3:—

The elements  
Of *whom* your swords are tempered.

There are two other peculiarities in the use of the relative pronoun, both of which may derive illustration from the comparison upon which we are engaged. I mean the redundant insertion before the relative, of the definite article, and also of the personal pronoun. Thus, ‘*the* which,’ Matt. xiii. 14, and ‘*in the* which,’ Acts xxvi. 6, may be compared with *Coriolanus*, Act i. Sc. 1, ‘Fame, at *the* which he aims;’ and with *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act ii. Sc. 1:—

To lend me arms and aid, when I required them,  
*The* which you both denied.

And as examples of the other construction which I just now named, we have in Luke iv. 34, ‘I know *thee* who Thou art,’ and in *King Lear*, Act i. Sc. 1, ‘I know *you* what you are,’ and again in *King Henry VI. 3rd Part*, Act ii. Sc. 6:—

And he nor sees, nor hears *us* what we say.

The idiom is one supposed to be borrowed from the Greek. It is certainly frequent in the ancient Greek authors, especially the tragedians.

8. There is nothing which occurs to me as calling for remark in connexion with the grammar of *Adjectives* except the use of double comparatives and superlatives. Of the former Shakspeare would seem to have been specially fond. I have noted down more than thirty examples, and among them ‘more better,’ also ‘worser’ and ‘more worse,’

repeated several times. ‘More richer,’ ‘more wortier,’ ‘more corrupter,’ and ‘more worse’ are all to be found in *King Lear*, one of our poet’s later and more finished compositions. Double superlatives, such as ‘most best,’ ‘most unkindest,’ he has used much less frequently, i. e. in not more, I believe, than eight instances. Both these anomalies also may be considered as of Greek extraction, or at least they both occur not unfrequently in the Greek drama.\* But it is somewhat remarkable that our translators of the New Testament, from Tyndale downwards, have chosen to introduce the double superlative in Acts xxvi. 5, ‘after the *most straitest* sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee,’ though the original Greek is content with a single one. This is the only example of a double superlative which I have observed in the English Bible;† but the older version of the Psalms in the Prayer Book still retains the expression ‘most highest’ in more than a dozen places; where, Bp. Lowth has well remarked, ‘it acquires a singular propriety from the subject to which it is applied, viz. the Supreme Being, who is *higher than the highest*.’ Of the double comparative no scriptural example occurs to me except in the use of the word ‘lesser,’ in Gen. i. 16; ‘The *lesser* light to rule the night,’

\* See Bishop Monk’s note on the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, v. 487.

† The word ‘chiefest,’ however, which is in principle equally anomalous, occurs several times in both the Old and New Testament.

and in three other texts. Dr. Johnson tells us that the adjective 'little' has two comparatives, 'less' and 'lesser'; but I am rather inclined to agree with Bp. Lowth that it is a barbarism, and that *worser* sounds much more barbarous only because it has not been so frequently used. And may not this have arisen from the fact that our translators of the Bible have accepted the one, but rejected the other? It is Lord Macaulay who\* speaks of 'our noble translation of the Bible' as 'a book from the authority of which there is no appeal, where the question is about the force of an English word.'

9. The grammar of the *Verb* presents to us little or no occasion for remark, without descending to *minutiæ* which would be felt by the general reader to be irksome, if not out of place. The remaining parts of speech, *Adverbs*, *Prepositions*, and *Conjunctions*, I shall also dismiss without much notice.

The *adverb* 'when' was formerly often used with the addition of 'as' or 'that.' Thus in Matt. i. 18, we find, 'when as His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph,' &c. And in *King Henry IV. 2nd Part*, 'When that your flock, assembled by the bell,' &c. Act iv. Sc. 2.

In 1 Tim. v. 23, 'Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thy often infirmities,' the *adverb* 'often' is employed to represent an adjective; as *adverbs*, we know, constantly are in Greek, with

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\* *History of England*, ii. 486.

the help of the article. And upon the authority of this passage Dr. Johnson, in his Dictionary, actually gives it as an adjective with the meaning 'frequent.' In like manner King Lear speaks of Cordelia as 'my *sometime* daughter,' Act i. Sc. 1. And in *King Richard III.* the same construction enables us to understand a difficult line where the Queen Elizabeth, widow of King Edward IV., says to Richard :—

But that *still* use of grief makes wild grief tame,  
My tongue should to thy ears not name my boys.

Act iv. Sc. 4.

'*Still* use,' i. e. as Steevens explains it, *constant* use. In the same way Shakspeare uses the expression '*seldom pleasure*' in his 52nd Sonnet :—

So am I as the rich, whose blessed key  
Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,  
*The which* he will not every hour survey  
For blunting the fine point of *seldom pleasure*.\*

i. e. for fear of blunting, &c.

The use of the preposition 'for' prefixed to verbs of the infinitive mood would strike us now as a vulgarism; but we meet with it in our Bible as well as in Shakspeare. See, for example, Deut. iv. 1, 'for to do them'; Matt. xxvii. 6, 'It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury'; Ps. lxxi. 16, P. B. version, 'all them that are yet for to come.' In like manner we read in *Hamlet*, Act iii. Sc. 1, 'which for to prevent,' &c.

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\* On the sentiment, see below, Part II. ch. ii. sect. 15.

The separation of the two parts of which the *preposition* ‘toward’ is composed, by placing between them the noun which the preposition governs, is a peculiarity with which we are familiar from more than one passage in the English Bible. Thus in 1 Sam. xix. 4, Jonathan, speaking to his father Saul respecting David, says, ‘His works have been *to thee-ward* very good.’ And ‘*to God-ward*’ for ‘toward God’ occurs three times, viz. Exod. xviii. 19, 2 Cor. iii. 4, 1 Thess. i. 8. The counterparts to this usage in Shakspeare, are the following:—

In *King Henry VI. 1st Part*, Act iii. Sc. 3:—

Hark! by the sound of drum you may perceive  
Their powers are marching *unto Paris-ward*.

In *Coriolanus*, Act i. Sc. 6:—

As merry as when our nuptial day was done,  
And tapers burned to *bed-ward*.

Compare also ‘I go *wool-ward*,’ in *Love’s Labour’s lost*, Act v. Sc. 2.

The use of the *preposition* ‘against’ with reference to *time* is now become almost obsolete, yet I am not aware that we have any other word which supplies its place, and the notion which it expressed is one of frequent recurrence. Thus we read in Gen. xlivi. 25, concerning the sons of Jacob, ‘They made ready the present *against* Joseph came at noon.’ And in Exod. vii. 15, ‘The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee unto Pharaoh, in the morning;



lo ! he goeth out unto the water, and thou shalt stand by the river's brink *against* he come.'

In *Hamlet* it occurs three times :—

Some say that ever '*gainst* that season comes,  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
This bird of dawning singeth all night long.

Act i. Sc. 1.

But as we often see *against* some storm,  
A silence in the heavens—[i. e. just previous to].

Act ii. Sc. 2.

Yea, this solidity and compound mass  
With tristful visage, as *against* the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act.

Act iii. Sc. 4.

But so far as I have noted, it is not to be found more than thrice in all the rest of Shakspeare, viz. in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act iv. Sc. 1, '*against* thou shalt awake ;' *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act v. Sc. 1, '*against* your nuptial ;' and in *King Richard II.* :—

They'll talk of state, for every one doth so,  
*Against* a change.

Act iii. Sc. 4.

In the phraseology of Shakspeare's time, the *preposition* or *adverb* was often repeated in a manner which we should now think slovenly. Thus we read in *As you like it*, Act ii. Sc. 7, 'The scene, wherein we play *in* ;' and in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act i. Sc. 5, 'That fair, *for* which love groaned *for*.' So too, in Job xli. 19, 'Out of his mouth . . . sparks of fire leap *out*.' Matt. vii. 'Cast *out* the

*mote out of thine own eye.'* Exod. iii. 5, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet.'

The conjunction 'because' is used in a remarkable manner, now quite obsolete, in Matt. xx. 31, 'The multitude rebuked them *because* they should hold their peace,' where the original means 'in order that.' There is an instance of the same quoted by Bp. Lowth from Bacon's 25th Essay; but I have not discovered any parallel to it in Shakspeare.

10. I conclude this chapter by producing a few forms of speech which either from their peculiarity, or because they have now ceased to be used in the same manner, appear to deserve remark.

The letter 'a' prefixed to nouns, to adjectives, and to participles, as in the phrases to 'run *a-foot*,' to 'flee *a-pace*,' to 'be *a-hungered*,' '*a-thirst*,' '*a-preparing*,' to 'go *a-fishing*,' to 'lie *a-dying*,' all which are to be found in our English Bible, has given rise to much discussion and difference of opinion among our grammarians. Some of the same, and others like to these, we meet with also in Shakspeare, as '*approach a-pace* ;' '*they were an-hungry* ;' '*looked a-squint*.' Bp. Lowth thinks that the 'a' in all such cases is the preposition 'on' a little disguised by familiar use and quick pronunciation. This is confirmed by the phrase in Acts xiii. 36, '*fell on sleep*,' which comes down to us from Cranmer's translation, 1539, and instead of which in Acts vii. 60, that translation, as well as

our Authorized Version, reads 'fell asleep.' Conversely, Shakspeare has in the *Tempest*, 'all *a-fire*', for 'all on fire,' as we should now more commonly say. Forms like '*a-hungered*', may be considered as derived from verbs, after the same manner as to 'set at one' gave rise to the verb to '*atone*'.\* Thus, *to set on hunger* would become *on-hunger*, and thence in the passive participle to be *on hungered*, *an hungered*, *a hungered*, and thence by corruption, *a hungry*.

'At unawares' is a remarkable phrase which both Shakspeare and our translators of the Bible have used more than once. See Numbers xxxv. 11, 'The slayer . . . . which killeth any person *at unawares*', but in verse 15 of the same chapter we read 'that killeth any person *unawares*', without the 'at.' See also Ps. xxxv. 8, 'Let destruction come upon him *at unawares*', and in the Apocrypha, 2 Macc. viii. 6. The examples in Shakspeare are three; two in *King Henry VI. 3rd Part* :—

So we, well covered with the night's black mantle,  
*At unawares* may beat down Edward's guard.

Act iv. Sc. 2.

Either betrayed by falsehood of his guard,  
Or by his foe surprised *at unawares*.      *Ibid. Sc. 4.*

And one in *Troilus and Cressida*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

The phrase 'and if,' in which *and* is redundant,

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\* See below, ch. ii. p. 30. Compare 'fall *at strife*', Acts xv. title.

*in the Bible and in Shakspeare.* 27

occurs in 1 Cor. vii. 13, ‘And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, *and if* he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.’ And again in verse 21 of the same chapter, ‘But *and if* thou marry, thou hast not sinned.’ So also Matt. xxiv. 48, ‘But *and if* that evil servant shall say in his heart,’ &c. In Shakspeare wherever the same phrase occurs the *and* is softened into *an*. Thus in *Othello* :—

It is not lost, but what *an if* it were? —  
Act iii. Sc. 4.

In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act i. Sc. 1 :—

Indeed a sheep doth very often stray,  
*An if* the shepherd be awhile away.

The phrase ‘by and by,’ as in S. Matt. xiii. 21, ‘When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, *by and by* he is offended,’ and again in S. Luke xxi. 9, ‘The end is not *by and by*,’ has gone through a considerable change since the beginning of the seventeenth century. In both those passages and in two others of the New Testament where it occurs, viz. S. Mark vi. 25, and S. Luke xvii. 7, it is used to represent a Greek word which signifies ‘immediately.’ And in Shakspeare it has sometimes the same meaning. Thus in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act iii. Sc. 4 :—

It is so very late, that we  
May call it early *by and by* :—Good night.

And again in the same play, Act v. Sc. 3 :—

Anon comes one with light to ope the tomb ;  
And *by and by* my master drew on him.

But occasionally our poet employs it more in accordance with the sense which it now bears ; as in *Hamlet*, Act v. Sc. 2 :—

I dare not drink yet, madam ; *by and by*.

The classical reader may compare the different meanings of the Latin adverb ‘maturè.’





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## CHAPTER II.

### *Of Noticeable Words found in the English Bible and in Shakspeare.*

**B**Y ‘noticeable words’ I mean such as are now rarely or never used in the same sense, or which have become altogether obsolete.

The most convenient form into which the materials intended for this chapter can be cast will be that of a comparative glossary.

What follows forms but a portion of the author’s own collection ; and it is offered merely as a sample of what every reader of Shakspeare and the Bible may do for himself.

**ABJECTS** : once in Bible, and once in Shakspeare.

Yea, the *abjects* gathered themselves together against me.

Ps. xxxv. 15.

We are the Queen’s *abjects*, and must obey.

King Rich. III. Act i. Sc. 1.

i. e. treated by her as *abjects*, or *vile persons*, rather than as *subjects* ought to be treated.

30            *Of Noticeable Words found*

**ADO**; once in Bible, frequent in Shakspeare.

Why make ye this *ado*, and weep ?                  Mark v. 39.  
Make ye no more *ado*, but all embrace him.  
*King Hen. VIII. Act v. Sc. 2.*

It means *trouble, difficulty, bustle, tumult*.

**ALLOW.**

That which I do, I *allow* not.                  Rom. vii. 15.  
Ye *allow* the deeds of your fathers.                  Luke xi. 48.  
I like them all, and do *allow* them well.  
*King Hen. IV. 2nd Pt. Act iii. Sc. 2.*  
Praise us as we are tasted ; *allow* us, as we prove.  
*Troilus and Cressida, Act iii. Sc. 2.*

Thus used it means to *approve of*. In the present ordinary signification to *permit*, it is also found in Shakspeare, but not, I think, in the Bible.

**AMAZE, AMAZEMENT.**

I do beseech your Majesty, make up ;  
Lest your retirement do *amaze* your friends.  
*King Hen. IV. 1st Pt. Act v. Sc. 4.*

i. e. *alarm them, confuse with terror*.

I will make many people *amazed* at thee. *Ezek. xxxii. 10.*  
And are not afraid with any *amazement*.      *1 Pet. iii. 6.*

**ATONE, ATONEMENT.**

I would do much to *atone* them. *Otbello, Act iv. Sc. 1.*

i. e. *reconcile them, 'set them at one again,' as we read in Acts vii. 26.* And we have the substantive *at onement*, in Bishop Hall's Satires, Book iii. S. vii. 69 :—

Which never can be set *at onement* more.

*in the Bible and in Shakspeare.*      31

Shakspeare uses both the verb and the substantive, and the former both as transitive and neuter.

He and Aufidius can no more *atone*. *Coriol.* Act iv. Sc. 6.

i. e. *be reconciled, agree.* But in the Bible, though the substantive is used frequently, the verb does not occur at all.

**BESTOW.**

There will I *bestow* all my fruits and my goods. *Luke xii. 18.*

i. e. *lay up, put away.* See also *2 Kings v. 24;*  
*2 Chron. ix. 25.*

We will *bestow* you in some better place.

*King Hen. VI. 1st Pt.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

**BEWRAY**=*discover, disclose.*

Thy speech *bewrayeth* thee.      Matt. xxvi. 73.

See also *Prov. xxvii. 16; xxix. 24.*

Should we be silent, and not speak, our raiment  
And state of bodies would *bewray* what life  
We have led since thy exile.    *Coriolanus*, Act v. Sc. 3.

From *Isaiah xvi. 3*, and from several places in Shakspeare, it appears that the use of this word was already fast becoming synonymous with that of the word *betray*, which has now superseded it.

**BRAVERY**: once only in the Bible.

In that day the Lord will take away the *bravery* of their tinkling ornaments about their feet.      *Isaiah iii. 15.*

i. e. *finery.*

With scarfs and fans and double change of *bravery*.

*Taming of Sbrew*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

It is remarkable that Shakspeare appears to use this substantive always in the above sense only; though he uses the adjective *brave*, not only for *fine*, but much more often in its present signification, viz. for *courageous*; while in the Bible neither substantive nor adjective is used at all in the modern sense. The adverb *bravely*, for *finely*, *splendidly* (of dress), occurs in Judith x. 4.

**BRING ON WAY**=*escort*.

Abraham went with them to *bring them on their way*.

Gen. xviii. 16.

I pray you, *bring me on the way* a little.

Othello, Act iii. Sc. 4.

**BRUIT**=*report*, from the French.

Behold, the noise of the *bruit* is come.

Jerem. x. 22.

The *bruit* thereof will bring you many friends.

Henry VI. 3rd Part, Act iv. Sc. 7.

**CARRIAGE**, in the sense of *that which is carried*, *b baggage, luggage*.

We took up our *carriages*, and went up to Jerusalem.

Acts xxi. 15.

See also 1 Sam. xvii. 22, and margin there; Isaiah i. 25; 1 Macc. ix. 31.

Many *carriages* he hath despatched  
To the sea side.

King John, Act v. Sc. 7.

Spenser uses the word in the same sense.

*in the Bible and in Shakspeare.*      33

**CASTAWAY**=*a person lost, or abandoned by Providence*; once in the Bible, twice in Shakspeare.

Lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a *castaway*.      1 Cor. ix. 17.

Why do you look on us, and shake your head,  
And call us—orphans, wretches, *castaways*?

*King Rich. III. Act ii. Sc. 2.*

**CHOICE**, adj.=*select, excellent*.

A *choice* young man and a goodly.      1 Sam. ix. 2.  
The *choice* and master spirits of this age.

*Jul. Cæsar, Act iii. Sc. 1.*

**CHOICE**, subst.=*the best of anything*.

In the *choice* of our sepulchres bury thy dead.      Gen. xxiii. 6.

Replete with *choice* of all delights.

*King Henry VI. 1st Pt. Act v. Sc. 5.*

**CONVERSE, CONVERSATION.**

The substantive, in the sense of *behaviour, manner of life, intercourse with*, is frequent in Scripture. See Ps. xxxvii. 14; Gal. i. 13; Phil. i. 27, &c. The verb occurs only in Baruch iii. 37, and in the title of Acts ii. Neither word has in the Bible its present meaning of *familiar discourse*. In Shakespeare both meanings may, I think, be found; e.g.

All are banished till their *conversations*  
Appear more wise and modest to the world.  
*Henry IV. 2nd Pt. Act v. Sc. 5.*

Alas! who can *converse with* a dumb show?  
*Merch. of Ven. Act i. Sc. 2.*



But the former, i. e. the old signification, is more common.

**CUNNING**, subst. *skill*, adject. *knowing, skilful*.

Let my right hand forget her *cunning*. Ps. cxxxvii. 5.

In our sports my better *cunning* faints

Under his chance. *Ant. and Cleop.* Act ii. Sc. 3.

Aholiab a *cunning* workman and embroiderer.

Exodus xxxviii. 23.

To *cunning* men

I will be very kind and liberal.

*Taming of Shrew*, Act i. Sc. 1.

**DAYSPRING**=*break of day, dawn*.

Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the *dayspring* to know his place? Job xxxviii. 12.

See also Luke i. 78.

As flaws congealed in the *spring of day*.

*King Henry IV. 2nd Part*, Act iv. Sc. 4.

**EAR**=*to plough, till* the land.

He will set them to *ear* his ground. 1 Sam. viii. 12.

See also Is. xxx. 24; 'earing-time' in Exod. xxxiv. 21. Compare Gen. xlvi. 6.

Let them go

To *ear* the land. *King Rich. II. Act iii. Sc. 2.*

See also Shakspeare's dedication of his poem *Venus and Adonis*.

**FAVOUR**=*countenance*, frequent in Shakspeare; in the Bible the adjective only is used, as *well-*

*favoured*, *ill-favoured*, both which, and *hard-favoured*, occur also in Shakspeare.

I know your *favour* well,  
Though you have now no sea-cap on your head.

*Twelfth Night, Act iii, Sc. 3.*

Rachel was beautiful and well-favoured. Gen. xxix. 17.  
A shrewd ill-favoured wife. *Taming of Shrew*, Act i. Sc. 2.

The present meaning of the word is also found both in the Bible and in Shakspeare.

**FEAR**=to *frighten, terrify*; only once in Bible.

Though no terrible thing did *fear* them, &c. *Wisd.* xvii. 9.  
We must not make a scare-crow of the law,

*M. L. M. and H. S.*

Meas.)

Hence  $\cdot$  fearful  $\equiv$   
Fulu  $\cdot$  adu  $\cdot$  *curu*

*Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may  
keep your own tradition.*      *Mark viii. 19.*

Prospero, master of a full poor cell. *Tempest*, Act i, Sc. 2.

*Cecil May - Master of the House: Retrospective*

**GOOD-MAN = Master of the House, *Tutor famulus***

They murmured against the good-man of the house.

WATER USE

See also PROV. VII. 19.

This story shall the good-man teach his son.  
*King Henry V.*

*King Henry V.* Act IV. Sc. 3

## The old days of good-man Adam. King Henry IV.

*King Henry IV. 1st Part, Act II. Sc. 4*

**HARD**=*close, near.*

Naboth had a vineyard *bard* by the palace of Ahab.

I Kings xxi. 1.

See also Acts xviii. 7. It occurs in several other places in the Old Testament; but in Ps. xxii. 11, and cvii. 8, where the Prayer Book version has ‘hard at hand’ and ‘hard at death’s door,’ the Bible has ‘near’ in both places.

Indeed, my lord, it followed *hard* upon.

*Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 2.

**HARNESS**=*armour*.

Let not him that girdeth on his *barness* boast himself as he that putteth it off.

1 Kings xx. 2.

See also xxii. 34, and Prayer Book version of Ps. lxxviii. 10, where the Bible has ‘being armed.’

Before the Sun rose he was *barnessed* light.

*Troilus and Cressida*, Act i. Sc. 2.

**KNOW**=to *acknowledge, approve, bless*.

The Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous.

Ps. i. 6.

See also Exod. ii. 25, margin; Hosea xiii. 5; Nahum i. 7; John x. 14, 27; 2 Tim. ii. 19. In the following passage Shakspeare seems to use the word in the same sense.

I know you are my eldest brother, and, in the gentle condition of blood, you should so *know* me.

*As you like it*, Act i. Sc. 1.

**LEARN**=to *teach*.

Lead me forth in thy truth and *learn* me.

Ps. xxv. 2.

Prayer Book version; but in Bible ‘teach me.’ See also verse 8.

You must not *learn* me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure.

*As you like it*, Act i. Sc. 2.

## **LEASING**=*lying.*

**'Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing.'**

Ps. v. 6. See also iv. 2.

In his praise

Have almost stamped the leasing. *Coriolanus*, Act v. Sc. 2.

i. e. made the lie current.

**LET**=to hinder.

Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way,

See also Exod. v. 4; Isaiah xlivi. 13.

If nothing lets to make us happy. *Twelfth Night*, Act v. Sc. i.

Shakspeare also uses the substantive *let=hindrance*, which does not occur in the Bible.

Therefore my kinsmen are no *let* to me.

*Romeo and Juliet*, Act ii. Sc. 2.

That I may know the *let*, why gentle peace

**Should not expel these inconveniences.**

*King Henry V.* Act v. Sc. 2.

**LIKING**=good state of body, plumpness.

Their young ones are in good *liking*. Job xxxi. 4.

I have an eye to make difference of men's liking.

*Merry Wives, Act ii. Sc. i.*

We find the same word used also as an adjective.

Why should he see your faces worse *liking*? Dan. i. 10.

See also the Prayer Book version of Ps. xcii. 13, 'fat and well-liking ;' in Bible, 'fat and flourishing.'

*Well-liking wits they have; gross, gross; fat, fat.*

*Love's Labour's lost.*, Act v. Sc. 2.

**LIST**=to choose.

The wind bloweth where it listeth. John iii. 8.

Let them take it as they list.

*Romeo and Juliet*, Act i. Sc. 1.

**MAN-CHILD, MAID-CHILD**, for male child, and female child; in the plural we have ‘male children.’ Exod. i. title; Josh. xvii. 2.

If a woman have born a *man-child*. Levit. xii. 2.

But if she bear a *maid-child*. *Ibid.* 5.

I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a *man-child*, than now in first hearing he had proved himself a man.

*Coriolanus*, Act i. Sc. 3.

She brought forth

A *maid-child* called Marina. *Pericles*, Act v. Sc. 3.

**NEPHEW** = grandson, descendant; the Latin *nepos*.

If any widow have children or *nephews*. 1 Tim. v. 4.

See also Judges xii. 14; Job xviii. 19; Isaiah xiv. 22.

You’ll have your *nephews* neigh to you. *Othello*, Act i. Sc. 1.

Shakspeare also uses **NIECE** for *grand-daughter*, in *King Richard III*. Act iv. Sc. 1; and in his last will he speaks of his *grand-daughter* Elizabeth Hall as his ‘*niece*’.

**OR EVER**=before.

The lions brake all their bones in pieces *or ever* they came at the bottom of the den. Daniel vi. 24.

See also Prov. viii. 23; Eccles. xii. 6; Acts xxiii. 15. Compare ‘ere ever,’ in Ecclus. xxiii. 20.

I drink the air before me, and return.

*Or e'er* your pulse beat twice. *Tempest*, Act v. Sc. 1.

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See also *Hamlet*, quoted below, Pt. II. ch. iii.

PATE=*head*, once in Bible, frequent in Shakespeare.

His mischief shall return upon his own head ; and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.      Ps. vii. 16.

*Enter, skirmishing, the Retainers of Gloster and Winchester, with bloody pates.*      King Henry VI. 1st Part, Act iii. Sc. 1.

See also *Taming of the Shrew*, quoted above, p. 16.

PLAY=*to fence, fight.*

Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us.      2 Sam. ii. 14.

Compare Bp. Andrewes' second sermon on Ash Wednesday.

He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes.  
*Hamlet*, Act v. Sc. 2.

PORT=*gate*; Latin, porta.

That I may shew all thy praises within the ports of the daughter of Sion.      Ps. ix. 14. Prayer Book version.

In the Bible 'gates.' The word does not occur, I believe, at all in the Bible, either in this sense (though 'porter' does several times) or in its more modern use for *harbour*; Latin, portus. Shakspeare uses it in both senses, even in the same play :—

Hark, the Duke's trumpets ! I know not why he comes ;—  
All ports I'll bar.      King Lear, Act ii. Sc. 1.

No port is free, no place  
Does not attend my taking.      Ibid. 3.

Then is all safe ! the anchor's in the port.  
*Titus Andron.* Act iv. Sc. 4.

**PREVENT**=to (1) *come before*, (2) *go before*, in order to guide and *help*—not to hinder, and so the opposite of its present meaning, (3) *anticipate*; Latin *prævenio*.

1. In the morning shall my prayer *prevent* thee.

Ps. lxxxviii. 13.

2. Let thy tender mercies speedily *prevent* us.

Ps. lxxix. 8. See also Ps. xxi. 3.

3. We which are alive shall not *prevent* them which are asleep.

1 Thess. iv. 15. See also Ps. cxix. 148; Matt. xvii. 25.

I would have staid till I had made you merry,  
If worthier friends had not *prevented* me.

*Merchant of Venice*, Act i. Sc. 1.

This seems to fall under the third meaning; and I am not sure that Shakspeare affords an example of any other; except the modern one, viz. to *hinder*, which is also found in the Bible. The instance, however, which Johnson quotes from Shakspeare, and interprets in the sense of to *hinder*, ought, I think, to be interpreted in the sense of to *anticipate*.

I do find it cowardly and vile,  
For fear of what might fall, so to *prevent*  
The time of life. *Julius Cæsar*, Act v. Sc. 1.

In the same play, iii. 1, the substantive **PREVENTION** is used with the same meaning:—

Casca, be sudden; for we fear *prevention*.

**PROPER**=*good-looking, handsome, fair*.

Because they saw he was a *proper* child. Heb. xi. 23.

The same Greek word, which is here used, is

*in the Bible and in Shakspeare.* 41

applied also to Moses, when a child, in Acts vii. 20, and is there translated ‘fair.’ Compare Exod. ii. 2, ‘goodly child.’

She finds, altho’ I cannot,  
Myself to be a marvellous *proper* man;  
I’ll be at charges for a looking glass.  
*King Rich.* III. Act i. Sc. 3.

**QUICK**=*alive, lively.*   **QUICKEN**=to *revive, animate.*

If the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth . . . . and they go down *quick* into the pit, Numb. xvi. 30. See verse 33, ‘They went down alive into the pit.’ See also Ps. xxxv. 15, cxxiv. 3. ‘*Quick* and dead,’ Acts x. 42; 2 Tim. iv. 1; 1 Pet. iv. 5.

The word of God is *quick* and powerful.

Heb. iv. 12. See also Isaiah xi. 3.  
That which thou sowest is not *quickened*, except it die.

1 Cor. xv. 36.

Thou’rt *quick*,  
But yet I’ll bury thee. *Timon of Athens*, Act iv. Sc. 3.  
Now pile your dust upon the *quick* and dead.

*Hamlet*, Act v. Sc. 1.

The mistress which I serve *quickens* what’s dead.

*Tempest*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

Shakspeare also uses the verb as neuter:—

These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin,  
Will *quicken* and accuse thee. *King Lear*, Act iii. Sc. 7.

**ROAD**=‘*rajd*,’ *inroad*, once in Bible.

Whither have ye made a *road* to-day? 1 Sam. xxvii. 10.

This word does not occur in the Bible in the modern sense; but Shakspeare uses it (1) in the

sense above named ; (2) for *roadstead*, i. e. a place for ships to anchor in ; and (3) in its present ordinary signification for a public way.

1. Against the Scot, who will make *road* upon us  
With all advantages.      *King Henry V.* Act i. Sc. 2.
2. Here I read for certain that my ships  
Are safely come to *road*.      *Mereb. of Ven.* Act v. Sc. 1.
3. What wouldst thou have me . . . enforce a thievish living  
On the common *road*?      *As you like it,* Act ii. Sc. 3.

In one place also, *Henry VIII.* iv. 2, ‘with easy roads’ is used for easy stages.

**ROOM**=place, seat at table.

When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest *room*.      *Luke xiv. 8.* See also *Matt. xxiii. 6.*

Grief fills the *room* up of my absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me.

*King John,* Act iii. Sc. 4.

**RUNAGATE**=fugitive, rebel, apostate; French, renégat.

God bringeth the prisoners out of captivity, but letteth the *runagates* continue in scarceness. Prayer Book version of Ps. lxviii. 6, where the Bible has ‘the rebellious.’

I'll send to one in Mantua,  
Where that same banished *runagate* doth live.

*Romeo and Juliet,* Act iii. Sc. 5.

**SECURE**=confident, careless. Lat. *sine curâ*.

Gideon . . . smote the host, because the host was *secure*.  
*Judges viii. 11.*

‘Tis done like Hector, but *securely* done.

*Troilus and Cressida,* Act iv. Sc. 5.

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SITH=*since*.

*Sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee.*  
Ezek. xxxv. 6.

*Talk not of France, sith thou hast lost it all.*

*King Henry VI. 3rd Part, Act i. Sc. 1.*

SORT=*class, order of persons.*

Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort.    Acts xvii. 5.  
Assemble all the poor men of your sort.  
*Julius Cæsar, Act i. Sc. 1.*

TABLE=*tablet.*

The tables were written on both their sides.

Exod. xxxii. 15. Comp. 2 Cor. iii. 3.  
Therefore will he wipe his tables clean,  
And keep no tell-tale to his memory.  
*King Henry IV. 2nd Part, Act iv. Sc. 1.*

THOUGHT, used intensively for *care, anxiety, melancholy.*

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat.  
Matt. vi. 25.

Comp. Phil. iv. 6, where the same Greek word  
is rendered ‘careful.’

If he love Cæsar, all that he can do  
Is to himself; take thought, and die for Cæsar.  
*Jul. Cæsar, Act ii. Sc. 1.*

Compare *Antony and Cleopatra*, ‘think and die.’  
Act iii. Sc. 2.

TROW=*to imagine, deem, believe.*

Doth he thank that servant? I trow not.    Luke xvii. 9.  
What tempest, I trow, threw this whale ashore?  
*Merry Wives of Windsor, Act ii. Sc. 1.*

WIS, WIT, and WOT (originally the past tense of the former), to know, perceive, think.

They *wist* not what it was. Exod. xvi. 15.

We do you to *wit* of the grace of God, &c.

2 Cor. viii. 1. See also Exod. ii. 4.

My master *wotteth* not what is with me in the house.

Gen. xxxix. 8.

What I shall choose, I *wot* not.

Phil. i. 22.

I *wis* your grandam had a worser match.

*King Richard III.* Act i. Sc. 3.

Submission, Dauphin? 'tis a mere French word;

We English warriors *wot* not what it means.

*King Henry VI. 1st Part,* Act iv. Sc. 7.

I conclude this chapter with a remark upon the phrase *well stricken in years*, which we find in Luke i. 7: 'They had no child because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now *well stricken in years*.' In Tyndale's Translation, 1534, and Cranmer's, 1539, the words were 'well stricken in age'; which we find also in Gen. xviii. 11, and xxiv. 1. Is it possible that our translator of S. Luke altered the expression out of deference to the following passage of Shakspeare?

We speak no treason, man; we say the King

Is wise and virtuous: and his noble Queen

*Well struck in years.* *King Richard III.* Act i. Sc. 1.

Mr. Steevens, in his note upon the place (and there is no other note upon it in the Variorum edition), calls the phrase 'an odd, uncouth expression.' It does not appear to have occurred to him that it is

used several times in the English Bible (see, besides the passage in St. Luke, and the other texts referred to above, Josh. xiii. 1, xxiii. 1, and 1 Kings i. 1); still less that our poet might have *chosen* it in the above passage because the Queen spoken of was also an *Elizabeth*, wife of King Edward IV.



PORCH OF TRINITY CHURCH, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.



THE ROOM IN WHICH SHAKSPEARE WAS BORN.



## PART II.



THE ROOM IN WHICH SHAKSPEARE WAS BORN.



## PART II.



GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND GUILD CHAPEL, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.



## *INTRODUCTION.*

**T**HERE are three ways by which we may estimate the extent of Shakspeare's knowledge and use of Holy Scripture. The first is the obvious references to the facts and characters of the Bible which his plays contain ; the second, the tone and colouring which pervade his moral and religious principles and sentiments ; and the third, the poetical thoughts or imagery which he appears to have borrowed more or less directly from the Scriptures. I shall begin with the first, that is, the historical references, as affording the clearest and most direct proofs of our poet's study of the Bible, which it is my purpose to establish ; because, if we are satisfied that the point in question is demonstrated by these, we shall be more ready to admit the same conclusion when we come to deal with the two other branches of the evidence, which, from their own nature, must necessarily be of a less definite and exact, and consequently less convincing character.

But before proceeding with the task thus pre-

scribed, it is due to the character of our great poet that I should point out how much misconception respecting Shakspeare's treatment of Holy Scripture has prevailed among his critics, even of the highest rank. Let me produce one notable example, derived from the play of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act iii. Sc. 11.

After the ignominious flight, in which Antony had followed Cleopatra from the coast of Actium back to Alexandria, Octavius Cæsar, the conqueror, sends a messenger to endeavour to detach the queen from her paramour. This messenger is received favourably by Cleopatra in a private interview, and just as he is kissing her hand, previous to his departure, Antony comes in, and in the highest strain of indignation, embittered by the consciousness of his downfall and disgrace, upbraids her as follows :—

*Antony.* To let a fellow that will take rewards,  
And say, *God quit you!* be familiar with  
My playfellow, your hand ; this kingly seal,  
And plighter of high hearts ! O that I were  
*Upon the bill of Basan, to outroar*  
*The borned berd,* for I have savage cause :  
And to proclaim it civilly were like  
A halter'd neck, which does the hangman thank  
For being yare\* about him.

This passage gives striking evidence of our poet's familiarity with the Old Testament; see

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\* i. e. adroit.

Ps. xxii. 12, lxviii. 15; Ezek. xxxix. 18; Amos iv. 1. But is there anything to give offence even to the most pious mind, in the way in which he has applied his knowledge of these passages? And yet not only has Mr. Bowdler omitted the reference to the 'hill of Basan' as indecorous, but critics, including Johnson himself, have concurred in condemning it as matter for regret, nay even for 'pity and indignation.'

I confess I am not surprised that the editor of the 'Variorum edition,' Mr. James Boswell, though he professes in general to have scrupulously retained all the critical remarks of his predecessors, yet made an exception, by venturing, as he says, 'in a very few instances,' to expunge a note in which Shakspeare had been, in his opinion, 'most perversely and injuriously charged with an irreverent allusion to Scripture.'\* I am sorry he did not carry the process of expunction so far as to delete the note of Johnson just referred to.† Nor can I omit to add that, while I desire to express my thankfulness to Mr. Bowdler for the manner in which he has executed his praiseworthy undertaking in many respects, I very much regret the undue sensitiveness which has led him sometimes to alter, and sometimes to omit, passages perfectly inoffensive, for no other

\* Vol. i. Advertisement, p. 8. See above, p. 3.

† See also another note of Johnson, to the same effect, given in that edition, vol. xi. p. 455, and a note of Steevens, vol. viii. p. 119.

reason that I can discover, except the allusion they contain to the language of Scripture.

The following example may suffice in proof of what has now been said. In the *Second Part of King Henry VI.* Queen Margaret says to the king:—

What, dost thou turn away, and hide thy face?  
I am no loathsome leper, look on me.  
What, art thou, *like the adder*, waxen deaf?  
Be poisonous too, and kill thy forlorn queen.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

These three last lines are *omitted* by Mr. Bowdler. And why? Because we read about ‘lepers,’ and still more, because we read about ‘deaf adders’ in the Bible. See Psalm lviii. 4, 5: ‘Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the *deaf adder* that stoppeth her ear; they will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.’ This beautiful image appears to have struck the imagination of our poet, and not without reason. He therefore makes use of it again, and with singular propriety, in *Troilus and Cressida*; where Hector says to Paris and Troilus:—

Pleasure and revenge  
Have ears more deaf than adders, to the voice  
Of any true decision.                           Act iii. Sc. 2.

This Mr. Bowdler has *altered* into

Have ears for ever deaf unto the voice, &c.,

whereby the notion of truth charming wisely, but in

*vain*, is altogether lost, and a most flat line substituted for a most vigorous one. And why? Because Mr. B. appears to have been haunted by an exaggerated and mistaken fancy, that whatever is calculated to remind the reader of a Scriptural image, however beautiful and however appropriate, must necessarily be profane! What, I wonder, would Mr. B. have done if he had undertaken to edit, not only the plays, but also the sonnets of Shakspeare; in the cxii. of which we read as follows:—

In so profound abysm I throw all care  
Of others' voices, that *my adder's sense*  
To critic and to flatterer stopped are;—

where, by a curious instance of the figure, called in Greek σχῆμα πρὸς τὸ σημαινόμενον, ‘are’ seems as if put to agree with *ears*, implied in ‘adder’s sense.’

I now pass on to the evidence of which I proposed to treat in the first instance.





## CHAPTER I.

*Of the Allusions in Shakspeare to the Historical Facts  
and Characters of the Bible.*

**N** this chapter I have to show the extent of Shakspeare's knowledge of the contents of the Bible in its historical aspect; how fully and how accurately the general tenor of the facts recorded in the sacred narrative was present to his mind.

We may begin then from the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis. There can be no doubt that the Mosaic record of the creation of the sun and moon, on the fourth day, when 'God made two great lights; the *greater light* to rule the day, and the *lesser light* to rule the night,' gave occasion to those words of Caliban in the *Tempest*, where he describes how Prospero, on his first coming to the island, had been wont to treat him kindly; and as trying to educate him, would often teach him

How

To name *the bigger light*, and how *the less*,  
That burn by day and night.                   Act i. Sc. 2.

And again, when our poet in *King Henry VIII.* (see below, ch. ii. sect. 2), speaks of ‘man’ as ‘the image of His Maker,’ we may be sure he was thinking of the same record which testifies that ‘God created man in His own image.’

We know what followed only too soon after the Creation. Our first parent had been ‘put into the garden of Eden to *dress* it, and to *keep* it,’ Gen. ii. 15; but we have only to look on to the next chapter, and we read the sad tidings of his fall, and consequent expulsion from that happy place, under the curse of God. It is not without some awkwardness and confusion of ideas, that these circumstances are supposed to be present to the mind of the Queen of Richard II., when she overhears in a garden the king’s deposition spoken of, and coming forth from her concealment, thus addresses the gardener:—

Thou, old Adam’s likeness, set to *dress this garden*,  
How dares thy harsh-rude tongue sound this unpleasing news?  
What Eve, what serpent hath suggested thee  
To make a second *fall of cursed man*?  
Why dost thou say king Richard is deposed?

*King Richard II.* Act iii. Sc. 4.

Again, we read of ‘Adam that *kept* the Paradise’ in the *Comedy of Errors*, Act iv. Sc. 3; and in the same scene he is spoken of as ‘old Adam new apparelled,’ with reference to the statement in Gen. iii. 21.

That ‘the woman, being deceived, was in the



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transgression' (1 Tim. ii. 4) first, and not the man, is alluded to in *Lore's Labour's lost*, where Biron says of Boyet,

Had he been Adam, he had tempted Eve.    Act v. Sc. 2.

And the evil quality which led her into temptation was the desire, thro' pride, of knowing and enjoying more than was permitted her, Gen. iii. 6. Consequently that a woman should be 'proud' is designated by our poet as 'Eve's legacy,' in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

Whatever comes from the mouth of Falstaff may provoke a smile, yet we must all feel that there is the greatest occasion in reality for deep seriousness, when we hear him say to Prince Henry :—

Dost thou hear, Hal? Thou knowest *in the state of innocence Adam fell*, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy?    *King Henry IV. 1st Part*, Act iii. Sc. 3.

It is the same Prince Henry, of whom afterwards, when he became king, the Archbishop of Canterbury thus testified :—

The breath no sooner left his father's body,  
But that his wildness, mortified in him,  
Seemed to die too: yea, at that very moment,  
Consideration like an angel came  
And whipp'd *the offending Adam* out of him;  
Leaving his body as a paradise,  
To envelop and contain celestial spirits.

*King Henry V. Act i. Sc. 1.*

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\* See Rom. vi. 6; Eph. iv. 22; Col. iii. 9.

And he himself, as king, spake thus of the vile conspirator Lord Scroop :—

I will weep for thee;  
For this revolt of thine methinks is like  
*Another fall of man.*      *Ibid.* Act ii. Sc. 1.

Again, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, we meet with a reference to the same chapters of Genesis, in a passage which the fastidiousness of Mr. Bowdler has not allowed him to retain, but which surely need not excite any feeling of irreverence towards the sacred record. ‘I would not marry her,’ says Benedick of the Lady Beatrice ‘though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed.’ (Act ii. Sc. 1.) Nor need we, I think, be offended at the dialogue between the two clowns in *Hamlet*, where allusion is made to the same primeval history :—

*1st Clown.* Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers: they hold by Adam’s profession.\*

*2nd Clown.* Was he a gentleman?

*1st Clown.* He was the first that ever bore † arms.

*2nd Clown.* Why, he had none.

*1st Clown.* What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand Scripture? The Scripture says, *Adam digged.* Could he dig without arms?      Act v. Sc. 1.

\* Compare *King Henry VI. 2nd Part*: ‘Adam was a gardener.’  
Act iv. Sc. 2.

† In Earle’s *Microcosmography*, under the character of ‘a Herald,’ we read: ‘His trade is honor, and he sells it, and gives arms himself, tho’ he be no gentleman,’ p. 130.



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And as Adam digged, so he would be exposed to the inclemency of the weather ; which has been also the lot of the greater portion of his posterity ; thus alluded to in *As you like it* : Scene, Forest of Arden :—

*Duke Sen.* Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,  
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet  
Than that of painted pomp ? Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court ?  
Here feel we but \* the penalty of *Adam*,  
The season's difference ; as, the icy fang  
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind. *Act ii. Sc. 1.*

Once more : in allusion to Gen. iii. 14, Emilia says to Othello, with reference to the jealous suspicions he entertained :—

If any wretch hath put this in your head,  
Let Heaven requite it with the *serpent's curse* !

*Othello*, *Act iv. Sc. 2.*

2. The history of Cain—‘the first male child’†—and Abel is of such a character that it would naturally suggest materials of thought to a tragic poet. Accordingly, the references which Shak-

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\* The emendation of Theobald for ‘not,’ which Boswell objects to, and pronounces the old reading to be right. I wonder that neither of them has remarked how much the conjecture of the former is confirmed by the song which follows in *Act ii. Sc. 5* :—

‘ Here shall we see

No enemy

*But winter and rough weather.*’

† *King John*, *Act iii. Sc. 4.*

speare has made to it are frequent and striking.  
First, in *King Richard II.* :—

*Bolingbroke.* Further I say, and further will maintain,  
That he \* did plot the Duke of Gloster's death ;  
And, consequently, like a traitor coward,  
Sluiced out his innocent soul through streams of blood :  
Which blood, like sacrificing *Abel's*, cries  
*Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth*  
To me for justice, and rough chastisement. Act i. Sc. 1.

It is needless to observe how accurately, and at the same time how reverently, this language represents both the letter and the spirit of the Biblical narrative. And so, too, where the King says in *Hamlet* :—

Next we trace it in the *First Part of King Henry VI.*—a passage which Bowdler has thought it necessary to expunge—where the poet with much propriety puts into the mouth of the haughty Cardinal Beaufort, great uncle to the king, addressing Duke Humphrey, the king's uncle and Protector, these bold and wrathful lines :—

Nay, stand thou back, I will not budge a foot :  
This be Damascus : be thou cursed Cain,  
*To slay thy brother Abel*, if thou wilt.      Act i. Sc. 3.

It had been recorded by Sir John Mandeville,

\* Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk.

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who travelled in the East in the fourteenth century, that ‘in that place where Damascus was founded, Cain slew his brother Abel.’ It is also said that the name Damascus means ‘a sack of blood,’ or ‘a cup of blood.’ But our poet has turned the same tragical history to a still more striking account, in the *Second Part of King Henry IV.*; I allude to the scene in which the Earl of Northumberland, as an enemy to the King, thus speaks, throwing upon the ground the cap which he had worn in sickness:—

Hence, thou sickly quoif;  
Thou art a guard too wanton for the head,  
Which princes, flushed with conquest, aim to hit.  
Now bind my brows with iron; and approach  
The ragged’st hour that time and spite dare bring,  
To frown upon the enraged Northumberland!  
Let heaven kiss earth! Now let not nature’s hand  
Keep the wild flood confined! Let order die!  
And let this world no longer be a stage,  
To feed contention in a lingering act;  
But let *one spirit of the first-born Cain*  
Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set  
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,  
And darkness be the burier of the dead.   Act i. Sc. 1.

A magnificent speech, in which the classical reader may fancy that he sees the utmost merit of two great, but most opposite Roman poets—Lucretius and Lucan—combined in one.

The punishment of Cain is recorded in Gen. iv. 12. ‘A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in

the earth.' It is obviously with these words upon his mind that our poet causes Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV., to address Exton, whom he had employed to murder Richard, as follows :—

The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labor,  
But neither my good word, nor princely favor ;  
*With Cain go wander* thro' the shade of night,  
And never show thy head.

*King Richard II.* Act v. Sc. 6.

Another passage remains, which I shall not hesitate to produce, though, more than any of the foregoing, it requires to be read with allowance for the speaker, for the scene, and for the circumstances in which it was spoken. It is from the grave scene of *Hamlet*. The clown is engaged in digging, and having thrown up a skull, Hamlet thus speaks :—

That scull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave jowls\* it to the ground, as if it were *Cain's jaw-bone,*  
*that did the first murder.* Act v. Sc. 1.

3. To the next great event in the history of the world—the Universal Deluge—there is less reference in our poet's works than might perhaps have been expected. It is spoken of as 'Noah's flood' in the *Comedy of Errors*, Act iii. Sc. 2; and in the last scene of *As you like it*, which winds up with the marriages of four couples, Jaques, on seeing

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\* i. e. dashes it violently.

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the fourth—Touchstone and Audrey—come in, exclaims :—

There is, sure, another flood toward, and these couples are coming to the ark !

into which, as Warburton has remarked, the beasts that were not clean entered *two and two*. See Gen. vii. 2, 15. Again, in *Twelfth Night*, Act iii. Sc. 2, Fabian, the servant of Olivia, says to Sir Andrew Ague-cheek—‘I will prove it legitimate, Sir, upon the oaths of Judgment and Reason ;’ to which Sir Toby Belch adds, with as much deep truth as wit—‘And they (i. e. Judgment and Reason) have been grand jurymen since before *Noah was a sailor*.’ Moreover, our poet had learnt from the sacred history, not only that of the three sons of Noah ‘was the whole earth over-

is as ready as a borrower's cap. ‘*I am the king's poor cousin, Sir.*’

*P. Henry.* Nay, they will be kin to us, or they will fetch it from Japhet:— *Act ii. Sc. 2.*

that is, even if they go up so high as to Japhet to trace the descent.

4. The history of Job has the misfortune to appear only in connexion with Sir John Falstaff, first in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, where the following dialogue takes place in his presence:—

*Mrs. Page.* Why, Sir John, do you think, though we would have thrust virtue out of our hearts by the head and shoulders, and have given ourselves without scruple to hell, that ever the devil could have made you our delight?

*Ford.* What, a hodge pudding? a bag of flax?

*Mrs. Page.* A puff'd man?

*Page.* Old, cold, wither'd, and of intolerable entrails?

*Ford.* And one that is as slanderous as Satan?

*Page.* And as poor as Job?

*Ford.* And as wicked as his wife? *Act v. Sc. 5.*

Our poet's reference to Satan in the foregoing passage would seem to show that he remembered not only the history of Job, but the manner also in which it comes to be introduced.

To one portion of this complex accusation Falstaff has the grace to plead guilty, when in the *Second Part of King Henry IV.* he is brought up for trial before the Chief Justice, and, as making a shift to escape, counterfeits deafness.

*Chief Justice.* You hear not what I say to you.

*Falstaff.* Very well, my lord, very well: rather, an't please



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you, it is the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking, that I am troubled withal.

*Cbief Justice.* To punish you by the heels \* would amend the attention of your ears; and I care not, if I do become your physician.

*Falstaff.* I am *as poor as Job*, my lord; but not so *patient*: your lordship may minister the potion of imprisonment to me, in respect of poverty; but how I should be your patient to follow your prescription, the wise may make some dram of a scruple, or indeed a scruple itself.

Act i. Sc. 2.

5. The use which our poet has made of the history of Jacob and Laban in the *Merchant of Venice*, appeared, I conclude, objectionable to Mr. Bowdler; for he has omitted the entire passage, amounting to thirty-two lines:—but to me it appears so far otherwise, that I venture to cite almost the whole of it, as a remarkable instance of the tact with which Shakspeare could apply with perfect accuracy a passage of Scripture open to misconception, and yet divest its application of all dangerous tendency. Shylock, the rich Jew, is speaking to Antonio, the merchant of Venice, who proposed to borrow of him a large sum of money:—

*Sbylock.* Well, then, your bond: and let me see—but hear you; Methought you said you neither lend, nor borrow, Upon advantage.

*Ant.*      I do never use it.

*Sbyl.* When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep, This Jacob from our holy Abraham was

---

\* i. e. to put you in the stocks.

(As his wise mother wrought in his behalf)

The third possessor—aye, he was the third.

*Avt.* And what of him? Did he take interest?

*Sbyl.* No, not take interest; not, as you would say  
Directly, interest: mark what Jacob did.

When Laban and himself were compromised,  
That all the eanlings\* which were streak'd and pied,  
Should fall as Jacob's share, . . . .  
The skilful shepherd peeled me† certain wands,  
And stuck them up before the fulsome ewes,  
Who, then conceiving, did in eaning time  
Fall ‡ party-coloured lambs, and those were Jacob's.  
This was a way to thrive, and he was blest;  
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

*Avt.* This was a venture, Sir, that Jacob served for;  
*A thing not in his power to bring to pass,*  
*But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of Heaven.*  
Was this inserted to make interest good?  
Or is your gold and silver, ewes and rams?

*The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.*  
An evil soul producing holy witness,  
Is like a villain § with a smiling cheek;  
A goodly apple rotten to the heart;  
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

Act i. Sc. 3.

All this, I say—even to the beautiful and instructive lines with which the passage concludes—Mr. Bowdler has omitted; and so has deprived his reader of the opportunity of observing Shakspeare's

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\* Young lambs just dropt or *eaned*.

† See above, Pt. I. ch. i. p. 15.

‡ i. e. let fall, give birth to.

§ Comp. *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 5.

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knowledge of the Bible not only in the case of the narrative to which I am now mainly referring, but also in two other instances. In the line

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose,

there is evidently an allusion to the history of our Lord's temptation, as recorded in Matt. iv. and Luke iv. And the same allusion occurs again in *King Richard III.*, where the wicked Gloster (as he still was) is speaking of the treason and other crimes which he had committed, and not only disguised, but laid to the charge of others, who, he pretended, had by those same crimes wronged and displeased him :—

But then I sigh, and with a piece of Scripture,  
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:  
And then I clothe my naked villainy  
With old odd ends *stolen forth of Holy Writ*,  
And seem a saint, when *most I play the devil*.

Act i. Sc. 3.

i. e. by so quoting and misapplying\* Scripture.

The other instance in which a close knowledge of the Bible may be traced is in the use of the word 'falsehood' in the last line for 'knavery,' or 'dishonesty.'†

In a subsequent scene of the same play, the oath which is put into the mouth of Shylock bears

\* See below, Ch. ii. Sect. 2.

† See below, Ch. ii. Sect. 12.

further evidence of our poet's diligent and exact attention to the inspired record :—

By Jacob's staff, I swear  
I have no mind of feasting forth to night:  
But I will go.

See Gen. xxxii. 10, and compare Heb. xi. 21.

It was not likely that the touching language of the same patriarch, Jacob, when at a later period of his life he refused to allow his son Benjamin to be carried down into Egypt, would be thrown away upon our great dramatist. I allude to Gen. xlvi. 38 (compare xliv. 29, 31):—

And he said, My son shall not go down with you ; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone : if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Let us see how this pathetic passage has been turned to account in the *Second Part of King Henry VI.*, where Humphrey, Duke of Gloster, after the condemnation of his Duchess Eleanor for treason, thus speaks :—

Mine eyes are full of tears, my heart of grief:  
Ah! Humphrey, this dishonour in thine age  
*Will bring thy head with sorrow to the ground.*

And if we could entertain any doubt as to the source from whence this line has been derived, the doubt would be removed by what immediately follows. The duke adds, addressing the king :—

I beseech your majesty give me leave to go:  
Sorrow would solace, and mine age would ease;

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(i. e. ‘would have,’ ‘requires,’ as Johnson explains it.) To which the king replies:—

Stay, Humphrey, Duke of Gloster: ere thou go  
Give up thy staff: Henry will to himself  
Protector be: and God shall be my hope,  
My stay, my guide, and *lantern to my feet*:  
And *go in peace*, Humphrey; no less beloved  
Than when thou *wert* protector to thy king.

Act ii. Sc. 3.

Here ‘wert’ in the indicative mood, though supported by other high authorities, is ungrammatical, for ‘wast.’\* But let that pass. Upon the words, ‘lantern to my feet,’ Steevens has a note in these words: ‘This image, I think, is from our Liturgy: *a lantern to my feet and a light to my paths*.’ If by ‘Liturgy’ is meant the Psalter, or Version of the Psalms contained in the Prayer Book, this is correct; and a reference should have been made to Ps. cxix. 105. But it is a sufficient proof of the little attention that has been paid to the branch of Shaksperian criticism upon which we are engaged that this loose and inaccurate note should have been allowed to stand; and that both Steevens and Malone, ready as they were to encumber their poet’s page, and to disagree, should, on this occasion, have found nothing more to say; though other expressions in the same speech, such as ‘my stay, my guide,’ and again, ‘go in peace,’ might also have received illustration from Holy Scripture. See

\* See Lowth’s *Grammar*, p. 72.

2 Sam. xxii. 19. Ps. xviii. 18, ‘They prevented me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was *my stay*.’ Ps. xlvi. 14, ‘This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be *our Guide*, even unto death.’ Exod. iv. 18, ‘Jethro said to Moses, *Go in peace*.’ 2 Sam. xv. 9, ‘The king (David) said to Absalom, *Go in peace*;’ and the same phrase occurs frequently elsewhere in the Bible.

6. We find further evidence of our poet’s familiarity with the Book of Genesis in the references which he makes to Pharaoh’s two dreams which Joseph interpreted, see Gen. xli.; to the former, in *Hamlet*, where the prince says to his mother:—

Look you now what follows:

Here is your husband; like a mildewed ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother:— Act iii. Sc. 4.

to the latter, in *King Henry IV. 1st Part*, where Falstaff says to Prince Henry:—

If to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is lost: if to be fat be to be hated, then *Pharaoh’s lean kine* are to be loved. Act ii. Sc. 4.

From that passage we are carried on, first to *Twelfth Night*, where the clown says to Malvolio:—

There is no darkness but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than the *Egyptians in their fog*:— Act iv. Sc. 2.

and then to *As you like it*, Act ii. Sc. 5, where Jaques says:—

I’ll go sleep if I can; if I cannot, I’ll rail against all the *first-born of Egypt*.

Upon these last words we find the two following notes in the Variorum edition, one by Johnson, the other by Steevens :—

'The first-born of Egypt,' a proverbial expression for high-born persons. JOHNSON.

The phrase is Scriptural as well as proverbial. So in Exodus xii. 29: 'And the Lord smote all the first-born of Egypt.'

STEEVENS.

This is rather a curious way of dealing with the matter, and one feels somewhat at a loss to determine whether of the two pieces of criticism, though very different in kind, is the less satisfactory. The play in which the passage occurs turns upon two incidents, in both of which an *eldest* brother is mainly concerned, in the one as suffering, and in the other as doing injury. And the reflection, therefore, naturally presents itself to the moralising Jaques, that to be a *first-born son* is a piece of good fortune not to be coveted now, any more than it was in the days of Pharaoh, when *all the first-born of Egypt* were cut off, but rather to be ‘railed at.’ In Act i. Sc. 1, Orlando says to Oliver, ‘The courtesy of nations allows you my better in that you are the *first born*.’ If it be objected that Jaques was not yet aware of what had happened to Orlando, still, I think, the poet might have put the sentiment into the mouth of such an one as Jaques, to be as a kind of waking dream, half experimental in regard to what he already knew, half prophetic of what he would

soon discover; but, at all events, the reference to 'the old Duke,' who had been 'banished by his *younger brother*, the new Duke,' will hold good. See Act i. Sc. 1. And he 'rails at' him, not only as showing sympathy, after his quaint manner, with the old Duke's banishment, but as reflecting upon his own folly in becoming voluntarily a partaker of the banishment, and thereby forfeiting all his 'lands and revenues' to the usurper; as he had sung just before in the verse, which (he says) 'I made yesterday in despite of my invention:—

If it do come to pass  
That any man turn ass,  
*Leaving his wealth and ease,*  
*A stubborn will to please,*  
Here shall he see  
Gross fools as he,  
An if\* he will come to me.

7. The miraculous food provided for the chosen people in the wilderness is alluded to in the *Merchant of Venice*, where Lorenzo, hearing from Nerissa that he was to inherit all the property of Shylock, addresses her and Portia:—

Fair ladies, you drop *manna* in the way  
Of starved people.

Act v. Sc. 1.

Again, in *King Lear*, when the eyes of Gloster had been put out by Cornwall, the servants who

\* See above, Pt. I. ch. i. p. 27.



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were present thus philosophize upon the savage cruelty which he and Regan had shown :—

1st Serv. I'll never care what wickedness I do  
If this man comes to good.

2nd Serv. If she live long,  
And, in the end, meet the old course of death,  
Women will all turn monsters. Act iii. Sc. 4.

To ‘meet the old course of death’ is the same idea which we find in the mouth of Moses, with reference to the fate of the rebels Korah and his company.

If these men die *the common death of all men*, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. Numb. xvi. 29.

A further reference to an incident in the early history of the Israelites is to be met with in *King Henry V.*, where the King asks :

May I with right and conscience make this claim ?  
viz. the claim to the kingdom of France, in virtue of his actual, though irregular, succession to Edward III., whose mother Isabella was daughter to King Philip IV. of France—a claim alleged to have been barred by the operation of the Salic law. To this enquiry of his sovereign, the Archbishop of Canterbury answers :—

The sin upon my head, dread sovereign !  
For in the *Book of Numbers* it is writ,  
*When the son dies, let the inheritance*  
*Descend unto the daughter.* Act i. Sc. 2.

The Variorum edition affords here neither note nor reference. Our poet alludes to the divine answer given to the plea of the daughters of Zelophehad, as recorded in Numbers xxvii. 1-8, and again in Joshua xvii. 3, 4.

8. I am not sure that our poet is justified in putting a sword into the hand of Deborah, as he does in *King Henry VI. 1st Part*; where Charles, the Dauphin of France, says to the Maid of Orleans :—

Stay, stay thy hands; thou art an Amazon,  
And fightest with *the sword of Deborah*. Act i. Sc. 2.

All that we know from the sacred narrative is, that she consented to accompany Barak in the successful expedition against Sisera. See Judges iv. 9.

The manner by which Sisera met his death was doubtless in our poet's recollection when he put what follows into the mouth of Caliban. Stephano had asked him, with reference to his proposal to make away with Prospero, and take possession of the island, 'Can'st thou bring me to the party?'—

Yea, yea, my lord; I'll yield him thee asleep,  
When thou may'st knock a nail into his head.  
*Tempest*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

The play of *King Henry VI. 3rd Part*, contains a reference to another portion of the same Book of Judges, viz. xi. 30-40.

*Clarence.* Why, trow'st thou, Warwick,  
That Clarence is so harsh, so blunt, unnatural,

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To bend the fatal instruments of war  
Against his brother, and his lawful king?  
Perhaps, thou wilt object my holy oath :  
To keep that oath, were more impiety  
Than Jephthah's when he sacrificed his daughter.

Act v. Sc. 1.

This last line Mr. Bowdler has thought it necessary to omit. That Jephthah was one ' who obtained a good report through faith,' we know from the New Testament, Heb. xi. 32, 39; but this can be no sufficient cause to conceal the sacred narrative to which our poet refers, still less to condemn the use which he has made of it. We may conjecture that he had heard read in church the Homily 'against swearing and perjury,' the second part of which contains what follows:—

And Jephthah, when God had given to him victory of the children of Ammon, promised (of a foolish devotion) unto God, to offer for a sacrifice unto Him, that person which of his own house should first meet with him after his return home. By force of which fond and unadvised oath, he did slay his own and only daughter, which came out of his house with mirth and joy to welcome him home. Thus the promise which he made most foolishly to God, against God's everlasting will, and the law of nature, most cruelly he performed: so committing against God a double offence. Therefore, whosoever maketh any promise, binding himself thereunto by an oath, let him foresee that the thing which he promiseth be good and honest and not against the commandment of God; and that it be in his own power to perform it justly; and such good promise must all men keep evermore assuredly. But if a man at any time shall, either of ignorance or of malice, swear to do anything which is either

against the law of Almighty God, or not in his power to perform, let him take it for an unlawful and ungodly oath.

Godly and wholesome doctrine, which Shakspeare has taken occasion to insist upon in several other passages. Thus in the *Second Part* of the same play, Act v. Sc. 1 :—

*K. Henry.* Hast thou not sworn allegiance unto me ?

*Salisbury.* I have.

*K. Hen.* Canst thou dispense with Heaven for such an oath ?

*Salis.* It is great sin, to swear unto a sin ;

But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.

Who can be bound by any solemn vow

To do a murderous deed, to rob a man,

To reave the orphan of his patrimony,

To wring the widow from her custom'd right,

And have no other reason for this wrong,

But that he was bound by a solemn oath ?

So in *Troilus and Cressida*, Act v. Sc. 3 :—

*Hector.* Begone, I say : the gods have heard me swear.

*Cassandra.* The gods are deaf to hot and peevish vows ;

They are polluted offerings, more abhor'd

Than spotted livers in the sacrifice.

*Androm.* O ! be persuaded : do not count it holy

To hurt by being just : it is as lawful,

For\* we would give much to use violent thefts,

And rob in the behalf of charity.

*Cassand.* It is the purpose that makes strong the vow ;

But *vows to ev'ry purpose must not hold*.

And once more, in *King John*, where Cardinal

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\* Because we wish to give.



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Pandulph, the Pope's legate, says to Philip, King of France :—

O ! let thy vow  
First made to Heaven, first be to Heaven performed ;  
What since thou swor'st, is sworn against thyself,  
And may not be performed by thyself ;  
For that which thou hast sworn to do amiss  
Is [more\*] amiss when it is truly done ;  
And being not done where doing tends to ill,  
The truth † is then most done not doing it.

It is religion that doth make vows kept,  
But thou hast sworn against religion.

[So] thou dost swear only to be forsown,  
And most forsown to keep what thou dost swear.

Act iii. Sc. 1.

To return to Jephthah, whose history is again noticed by our poet in *Hamlet*, Act ii. Sc. 2 :—

*Hamlet.* O Jephthah, Judge of Israel—what a treasure had'st thou !

*Polonius.* What treasure had he, my lord ?

*Hamlet.* Why—one fair daughter, and no more,  
The which be loved passing well.

After Jephthah, the next Judge whose exploits are recorded in the Old Testament at any length is Samson. Besides alluding to his marvellous strength in *King Henry VIII.* Act v. Sc. 3, where he is associated with Sir Guy of Warwick and with Colbrand, the Danish giant ; and again in

\* So I would propose to read for 'not.'

† See below, Ch. ii. Sect. 12.

*King Henry VI. 1st Part*, Act i. Sc. 2, where he is coupled with Goliath; our poet has touched upon some of the main incidents of his life in what follows. The dialogue is between Don Adriano de Armado, a fantastical Spaniard, and Moth, his page:—

*Armado.* Comfort me, boy: What great men have been in love?

*Merb.* Hercules, master.

*Arm.* Most sweet Hercules ! More authority, dear boy, name more ; and, sweet my child, let them be men of good report and carriage.

*Motb.* Sampson, master: he was a man of good carriage, great carriage; for he carried the town-gates on his back, like a porter: and he was in love.

*Arm.* O well-knit Sampson! strong-jointed Sampson! I am  
in love too. *Love's Labour's lost*, Act i. Sc. 2.

And again at the close of the same scene, Armado thus soliloquizes :—

Love is a familiar. . . . There is no evil angel but love.  
Yet Sampson was so tempted; and he had an excellent strength.  
Yet was Solomon so seduced; and he had a very good wit.

9. We are now arrived at the history of David. His encounter with Goliath—‘the staff of whose spear,’ we are told, ‘was like a weaver’s beam’ (1 Sam. xvii. 7), is taken advantage of in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, where Falstaff declares :—

In the shape of man, master Brook, I fear not Goliath with a weaver's beam; because I know also life is a shuttle.

Act v. Sc. i.

The comparison in these last words is taken from Job vii. 6, 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.' Both references are a proof of Shakspeare's close acquaintance with Holy Scripture. It is reasonable therefore to suppose that, in *Cymbeline*, the manner of Cloten's death, which Guiderius thus describes:—

was derived from the same History, see 1 Sam. xvii. 51; and also that in the *Tempest*, where music is commended as

the service which David performed for Saul, see 1 Sam. xvi. 23, was present to our poet's mind.

Again, the circumstances of the death of Saul, when having lost his army, with his sons among the slain, he and his armour-bearer killed themselves, may be compared with the scenes between Antony and Eros, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act v. Sc. 12; and between Cassius and Pindarus, and again between Brutus and Clitus first, then Volumnius, and lastly Strato, in *Julius Cæsar*, Act v. Sc. 3 and 5.

The scene in *King Richard III.*, where Hastings is made to condemn himself in answer to the question of Gloster—

I pray you all, tell me what they deserve  
That do conspire my death?      Act iii. Sc. 3.

its of similar comparison with the scene between David and the prophet Nathan, recorded in 2 Sam. v. 7.

The devices by which Absalom ‘stole the hearts of the men of Israel’ from his father’s government, we read in 2 Sam. xv. 1–6, have been well translated by our poet to the artful usurper, Bolingbroke, in the *First Part of King Henry IV.*, where himself confesses :—

And then I stole all courtesy from heaven,  
And dressed myself in such bumility,  
That I did pluck allegiance from men’s hearts,  
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,  
Even in the presence of the crowned king.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

I still more at length in a later passage of the play, where Hotspur describes the treasonable practices of the same usurper :—

He presently—as greatness knows itself—  
Steps me\* a little higher than his vow  
Made to my father, while his blood was poor ;  
And now, forsooth, takes on him to reform  
Some certain edicts, and some strait decrees,  
That lie too heavy on the commonwealth :  
Cries out upon abuses, seems to weep  
Over his country’s wrongs ; and, by this face,  
This seeming brow of justice, did he win  
The hearts of all that he did angle for. Act iv. Sc. 3.

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\* See Pt. I. ch. i. p. 15.



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Compare with this the narrative of Scripture before referred to :—

And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate ; and it was so that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him . . . . and said unto him, See thy matters are good and right ; but there is no one deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, O ! that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice ! And it was so that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment : so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

- The affecting language in which David mourned for the death of his rebellious son :—

O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom ! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son !

*2 Sam. xviii. 33.*

am I wrong in supposing that this pathetic language may be traced in *Titus Andronicus* ? where the boy, son to Lucius, exclaims :—

O ! grandsire, grandsire ! even with all my heart  
*Would I were dead so you did live again :— Act v. Sc. 3.*

though it cannot be doubted, I suppose, that such display of affection is more true to nature when it is found, as in Scripture, in a descending line from the father to the son, than in ascent from the boy to the grandfather.

Once more ; the description of Absalom's personal beauty is in these words :—

*From the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.* 2 Sam. xiv. 25.

The description of Benedick's social attractions in *Much Ado about Nothing* is, that

*From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he is all mirth.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

To the name of Absalom we naturally join that of Ahithophel, whose odious character had been no less realised by our poet, as is plain from an expression which he puts into the mouth of Falstaff, in *King Henry IV. 2nd Part*, Act i. Sc. 2.

10. In the concluding scene of *King Henry VIII.*, in which Shakspeare exerts himself to do honour first to Queen Elizabeth, and then to King James, he shows his knowledge of the Bible in a remarkable manner by the speech which he puts most appropriately into the mouth of Archbishop Cranmer ; beginning with a reference to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon ; see 1 Kings x., 2 Chron. ix., and Matt. xii. 42.

This royal infant (heaven still move about her !),  
Tho' in her cradle, yet now promises  
Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,  
Which time shall bring to ripeness : she shall be  
A pattern to all princes living with her,  
And all that shall succeed. *Sheba was never*  
*More covetous of wisdom, and fair virtue,*



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Than this pure soul shall be. . . .  
She shall be loved and fear'd : her own shall bless her ;  
Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,  
And hang their heads with sorrow : good grows with her.  
*In her days, every man shall eat with safety  
Under his own vine, what he plants ; and sing  
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.  
God shall be truly known.*

And then, speaking of her successor, in the same prophetic strain :—

Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,  
His honor and the greatness of his name  
Shall be, and make new nations : he shall flourish,  
And, *like a mountain cedar*, reach his branches  
To all the plains about him. Our children's children  
Shall see this, and bless heaven. Act v. Sc. 4.

It is of King Solomon's reign that we read 'Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree,' 1 Kings iv. 25. See also Micah iv. 4; Zech. iii. 10.\*

11. The sacred narrative tells us that when the prophet Elijah had occasion to conceal himself from the tyranny of King Ahab, which he did by the brook Cherith, God commanded the ravens to feed him there, 1 Kings, xvii. 4. Drawing his inspiration, probably, from that source, our poet, in the *Winter's Tale*, makes Antigonus to say, when

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\* For a further reference to Solomon, see above, p. 77.

employed by King Leontes to expose the infant Perdita, with a view to her destruction :—

Come on, poor babe :

Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and *ravens*  
To be thy nurses !

Act ii. Sc. 3.

Again ; to deny sleep to God, as the Psalmist does—

Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep—  
Ps. cxxi. 4.

is an image which beautifully expresses the vigilance of His providential care ; for we know of no created being in the world that sleepeth not. And the taunt, therefore, of Elijah against the priests of Baal, when he mocked them, and said,

Cry aloud, for he is a god ; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure *be sleepeth*, and must be awaked—

1 Kings xviii. 27.

is just and natural. It is by an adoption of the same image that, in *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, Cleon says to his wife Dionyza :—

Our tongues sound deep our woes  
Into the air : our eyes do weep, till lungs  
Fetch breath that may proclaim them louder ; that,  
*If Heaven slumber*, while their creatures want,  
They may *awake their helps* to comfort them :—

Act i. Sc. 4.

where the old copy reads ‘ helpers.’ We have ‘ help’ used in the same way in Gen. ii. 18.

When Jezebel—whose character has been com-



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pared not inaptly to that of Lady Macbeth—had been thrown out of the window, and so killed, by the command of Jehu, he first trod her under foot, but afterwards, ‘when he came in, and had eat and drunk,’ he said :—

Go see now this cursed woman, and *bury ber* : for *sbe is a king's daughter.*      2 Kings ix. 34.

This command not improbably suggested to Shakespeare the speech which he has put into the mouth of Belarius, in *Cymbeline*, when Guiderius had come in with the head of Cloten, whom he had encountered and killed in self-defence :—

Great griefs, I see, medicine the less : for Cloten  
Is quite forgot. *He was a queen's son*, boys :  
And, though he came our enemy, remember,  
He was paid for that. Tho' mean and mighty rotting  
Together, have one dust, yet reverence  
(That angel of the world) doth make distinction  
Of place 'tween high and low. Our foe was princely ;  
And tho' you took his life, as being our foe,  
Yet *bury him as a prince.*      Act iv. Sc. 2.

12. We read in the book of Daniel, iii. 22, that ‘the furnace’ which was to consume Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, by the urgent command of King Nebuchadnezzar, having been made ‘exceeding hot, the fire slew those men that took them up.’ Doubtless it was to the recollection of this striking incident (as Steevens has suggested), that we owe that speech of the Duke of Norfolk, in

which he warns the Duke of Buckingham against the danger of attempting to alienate the King (Henry VIII.) from his then favourite Cardinal Wolsey :—

Be advised ;  
Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot  
That it do singe yourself.

*King Henry VIII. Act i. Sc. 1.*

When references to the facts of Sacred History are put into the mouth of a clown, we must expect to have occasion to remember the Horatian maxim,

Ridentem dicere verum  
Quid vetat?

But are all such references necessarily to be condemned as profane? In *All's well that ends well* the following dialogue occurs between Lafeu and the Clown, respecting Helena, whom they supposed to be dead :—

*Lafeu.* 'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady : we may pick a thousand salads, ere we light on such another herb.

*Clown.* Indeed, Sir, she was the sweet-marjoram of the salad, or, rather, the herb of grace.\*

*Lafeu.* They are not salad-herbs, you knave ; they are nose-herbs.

*Clown.* I am no great Nebucbadnezzar, Sir ; I have not much skill in grass.

Act iv. Sc. 5.

Mr. Bowdler thought it necessary to omit the former clause of this last speech—‘I am no great

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\* Rue. See *Hamlet*, Act iv. Sc. 5.



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Nebuchadnezzar'—out of respect, no doubt, to the Scripture narrative to which allusion is made. See Daniel iv. 25. Upon a point like this there may be a difference of opinion; but if we suppose—and for my own part, I do suppose—that the fact of Nebuchadnezzar's punishment was accepted by our poet in all simplicity of faith, and that no sinister intention whatever is implied by him in the allusion to it, we can scarcely, I think, find ground for censure, and shall be inclined to conclude that if the levity of a clown obtains through his wit a ready acceptance in other instances, it may at least be excused in this.\*

It is perhaps to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar that we are to assign *the History of Susannah*, which we find in the Apocrypha. But however this may

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\* There is a remarkable parallel to the passage in question from the pen of our English Theophrastus, the author of *Microcosmography*, who, in his character of *A plain Country Fellow*, thus writes:—

'He seems to have the punishment of *Nebuchadnezzar*, for his conversation (see above, p. 33) is among beasts, and his talons nose of the shortest; only he eats not *grass*, because he loves not *salad*.' p. 64. 'Salad' formerly had the name of 'grass.'

It should be remembered that the writer of the above, Dr. John Earle (selected one of the Westminster Assembly in 1642, made at the Restoration Dean of Westminster, and afterwards Bishop of Salisbury) was universally and most highly esteemed, both for his piety and learning, in the age in which he lived; as is proved by the characters that remain of him given by his contemporaries, who differed so widely as Lord Clarendon, Isaac Walton, and Richard Baxter.

be, there can be no doubt that Shakspeare had that story in view, and the detection by Daniel of the wickedness of the two elders, in that well-known passage of the *Merchant of Venice*, where Shylock is made to exclaim :—

*A Daniel come to judgment ! yea, a Daniel !  
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee !*

Act iv. Sc. 1.

Daniel, according to the history, v. 45, was ‘a young youth’ when he convicted the elders ‘of false witness by their own mouth,’ v. 61. And ‘from that day forth was Daniel held in great reputation in the sight of the people,’ v. 64. His detection also of the imposture of the priests of Bel, as we read in the Apocryphal *History of the Destruction of Bel and the Dragon*, may have contributed to suggest the propriety of the same allusion.

13. We pass on now into the New Testament. The character of Herod, as a violent and blood-thirsty prince, might have been, and no doubt was, well known to our poet from the Ancient Mysteries. And it is probably to his experience of Herod, as acted in a mystery, that in the advice given by Hamlet to the players, ‘not to tear a passion to tatters,’ &c., we owe the expression, ‘It out-herods Herod ; pray you avoid it,’ Act iii. Sc. 2. But we need not doubt that Shakspeare had in his



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mind's eye the Scriptural account of the murder of the Innocents, and of the affliction of their disconsolate mothers, represented by 'Rachel weeping for her children,' Matt. ii. 16-18, when, in *King Henry V.*, he made the king, speaking before the gates of Harfleur, to summon it to surrender in these terms :—

Therefore, you men of Harfleur,  
Take pity of your town, and of your people :  
If not, why in a moment look to see,  
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,  
Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused  
Do break the clouds, *as did the wives of Jewry*  
*At Herod's bloody-bunting slaughtermen.*

Act iii. Sc. 2.

'Herod of Jewry' is alluded to again more than once; as the representative of pride and power, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act i. Sc. 2; and of wicked faithless sensuality in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act ii. Sc. 1.

The notices in Shakspeare of occurrences in our Lord's ministry leave no doubt of the attention which he had paid to the Gospel narrative. In the *Merchant of Venice*, we should be pained with the reference to the miracle recorded in S. Matthew viii. 28-34, if it were put into any other mouth than that of Shylock. He had asked to speak

with Antonio. Bassanio proposes that he should come and dine where he will meet him.

*Sbylock.* Yes, to smell pork ; to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into !

Act i. Sc. 3.

Had our poet any reason for making use of the name 'Nazarite,' rather than 'Nazarene,' in this instance, or was it merely a mistake ?

The discourse which followed upon Christ's healing the man born blind (which S. John relates, ix. 41), appears to be hinted at in *King Henry VI. 2nd Part.* A pretended miracle of the same kind had been wrought at S. Alban's shrine, and when the man, Simpcox, is brought to the king, the latter is made to say :—

Great is his comfort in this earthly vale ;

Altho' by bis sight bis sin be multiplied. Act ii. Sc. 1.

The same king, in another part of the same play, has these words with reference to the rebels led on by Jack Cade :—

O ! graceless men ! they know not what they do.

Act iv. Sc. 4.

I need not remind the reader WHEN, and by WHOM, the same words were originally spoken with reference to a rebellion which has no parallel.

There is a noble speech put into the mouth of the Bishop of Carlisle, in *King Richard II.*, where that prelate protests against the usurpation of



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Bolingbroke, and prophesies of its evil consequences :—

I speak to subjects, and a subject speaks :—  
My lord of Hereford here, whom you call king,  
Is a foul traitor to proud Hereford's king :  
And if you crown him, let me prophesy,  
Disorder, horror, fear, and mutiny,  
Shall here inhabit, and this land be called  
The *field of Golgotha, and dead men's skulls.*  
O ! if you rear this house against this house,  
It will the woefullest division prove  
That ever fell upon this cursed earth.      Act iv. Sc. 1.

Besides the Scriptural reference in the name Golgotha (which occurs again in *Macbeth*, Act i. Sc. 2), there is perhaps in these last lines a further allusion to the domestic 'divisions' which were prophesied to follow after the Crucifixion of Christ; see Mark xiii. 8, 12; Luke xii. 52. Compare also Matt. xii. 25.

In *King Henry VIII.*, Archbishop Cranmer is thus warned by his sovereign of the conspiracy which had been formed to effect his overthrow :—

Your enemies are many and not small.  
At what ease  
Might corrupt minds procure knaves as corrupt  
To swear against you! *Such things have been done.*  
You are potently opposed, and with a malice  
Of as great size. Ween\* you of better luck,  
I mean, *in perjured witness, than YOUR MASTER,*

\* Think, imagine, expect.

: minister you are, whiles bere He lived  
bis naughty earth? Act v. Sc. 1.

: xiv. 55, also Matt. x. 25.

passages in our poet which refer to the das are numerous; but the reader of Mr. ; edition will find scarcely one of them. I arrel with the omission in *King Richard II.* Sc. 2, where the three traitors, Bagot, id Green are described as 'Three Judases, thrice worse than Judas;' nor with the nt of the scene in *Love's Labour's lost*, . 2, where we read of the 'kissing traitor' nged himself on an elder.' But I see no reason for withholding either of the ex- ich I proceed to quote.

*Richard II.* the king, when summoned before the usurper who had supplanted him, speaks :—

why am I sent for to a king,  
I have shook off the regal thoughts  
with I reign'd ? . . . .  
orrow leave awhile to tutor me  
s submission. Yet I well remember  
ivours\* of these men. Were they not mine?  
ey not sometime cry ' All hail!' to me?  
*das did to Cbrist: but He, in Twelve,*  
*trutb in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none.*

• Countenances. See Pt. I. ch. ii.



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In the *Third Part of King Henry VI.* the revolting comparison is more justly appropriated to himself by the wicked Gloster. The king (Edward IV.) says to his brothers:—

*K. Edw.* Clarence and Gloster, love my lovely queen ;  
And kiss your princely nephew, brothers both.

*Clar.* The duty that I owe unto your majesty,  
I seal upon the lips of this sweet babe.

*K. Edw.* Thanks, noble Clarence ; worthy brother, thanks.

*Glo.* And, that I love the tree from whence thou sprangst,  
Witness the loving kiss I give the fruit :— [*Then aside.*]

To say the truth, so *Judas kissed his master* ;  
And cried ‘All bail !’ when\* as he meant all barm.

Act v. Sc. 7.

Again, in *As you like it*, where, speaking of Orlando, Celia says playfully to Rosalind, ‘Marry, his kisses are *Judas’s own children*,’ we can understand and feel that levity is out of place in such a connection of ideas ; and we can be well content, therefore, to miss the passage in which it occurs. But what are we to think of the capricious judgment which has excluded from *Timon of Athens* the illustration (because derived probably from Matt. xxvi. 23) by which the heathen misanthrope reproves the faithlessness of a selfish world :—

Why this

Is the world’s spirit ; and just of the same piece  
Is every flatterer’s spirit. *Who can call him*  
*His friend that dips in the same dish ?*

Act iii. Sc. 2.

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\* See above, p. 21.

while it has retained, in *Winter's Tale*, a comparison derived still more plainly from the same most sacred of all narratives? I allude to those words of Polixenes, in which he protests his entire innocence of the crime imputed to him by Leontes. If I be guilty of it, says he—

O! then my best blood turn  
To an infected jelly; and my name  
Be yoked with *bis that did betray THE BST!*

Act i. Sc. 2.

There are two passages in *Antony and Cleopatra* which remind us of the reconciliation of Herod and Pilate, effected, as it would seem, by their common action in the death of Christ. See Luke xxiii. 12.

But soon that war had end, and the time's state  
Made friends of them, jointing their force 'gainst Cæsar.  
Act i. Sc. 2.

I know not, Menas,  
How lesser ennities may give way to greater.  
Were't not that we stand up against them all,  
'Twere pregnant they would square between themselves;  
For they have entertained cause enough  
To draw their swords: but how the fear of us  
May cement their divisions, and bind up  
The petty difference, we yet not know. Act ii. Sc. 1.

Pilate's washing his hands, as recorded in Matt. xxvii. 24, is referred to by Shakspeare in two instances, one of which is omitted by Mr. Bowdler, while the other is retained.



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When King Richard II. is pressed by Bolingbroke and York to resign the crown, and Northumberland presents the paper containing the crimes alleged against him as the ground for his abdication, he thus upbraids them :—

Nay, all of you, that stand and look upon me,  
Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,—  
Tho' some of you, with Pilate, wash your bands,  
Showing an outward pity; yet you Pilates  
Have here delivered me to my sour cross,  
And water cannot wash away your sin.   Act iv. Sc. 1.

In place of the two intermediate lines, Mr. Bowdler has this one :—

Tho' some of you are showing outward pity.

In *King Richard III.*, after the murder of Clarence, one of the assassins exclaims :—

A bloody deed, and desperately despatched!  
How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my bands  
Of this most grievous guilty murder done.

Act i. Sc. 4.

No sooner had Pilate washed his hands than he gave orders for the release of the robber and murderer, Barabbas; who is also alluded to by our poet in the *Merchant of Venice*, where Shylock is made to say :—

I have a daughter;  
Would any of the stock of Barabbas  
Had been her husband, rather than a Christian!  
Act iv. Sc. 1.

Such is the Jew's *preference*, and so exactly has Shakspeare worked out his character in accordance with the Scripture narrative ! In like manner, when he speaks of 'the sepulchre in *stubborn Jewry*,' *King Richard II.* Act ii. Sc. 1, how accurately in one word does he sum up the character of the whole Jewish nation ; while in the *Merchant of Venice*, again, he depicts no less accurately the fulfilment of antient prophecy, which, by their 'stubbornness,' they have drawn down upon themselves, where Shylock confesses :—

Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.

Act i. Sc. 3.

The fine passage, at the opening of *Hamlet*, which Shakspeare has put into the mouth of Horatio, owes probably quite as much to S. Matthew or S. Mark as it does to Plutarch, or to Ovid ; though the critics have traced it only to the two latter.

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
*The graves stood tenantless*, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.  
Stars shone with trains of fire ; dews of blood fell ;  
Disaster veiled the sun ; and the moist star  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.

Act i. Sc. 1.

14. The references made by our poet to the



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history of the Acts are few and not of much moment; yet they indicate somewhat curiously, if I am not mistaken, the minuteness of his attention to the sacred record.

In the *First Part of King Henry VI.*, among other compliments paid by Charles Dauphin of France to Joan of Arc, she is pronounced superior to ‘Saint Philip’s daughters,’ Act i. Sc. 2, that is the ‘four daughters, virgins, that did prophecy’ of Philip the Evangelist, who are mentioned in Acts xxi. 9.

In the *Comedy of Errors*,\* the scene of which is laid at Ephesus, Pinch the Schoolmaster is represented also as a *conjuror*.† It will be remembered that Ephesus was the place where S. Paul ‘disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus,’ and where ‘many of them also that used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men.’ See Acts xix. 9, 19. But previously to this burning of the books we read in the same narrative, v. 13 :—

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, ‘We adjure thee by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.’

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\* One is inclined to suspect that the name *Antipholus* among the characters of this play is a mistake (on the part of author or printer) for *Amphibolus*; i. e. ἀμφίβολος, *ambiguous, doubtful*.

† On the union of the occupations of schoolmaster and conjuror, see Drake’s *Shakspeare and his Times*, vol. i. p. 95.

Compare with this the exorcism of Pinch in Act iv.  
Sc. 4.

I charge thee, Satan, housed within this man,  
To yield possession to my holy prayers,  
And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight ;  
*I conjure thee* by all the saints in heaven.

To this I may add that in *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, a servant at Ephesus, which was not far from Colossæ, has the name of Philemon.

In *King Richard III.* we read these words of Gloster, who is speaking—first to Hastings, and then to the officers in attendance :—

Thou art a traitor—  
Off with his head ! Now, *by Saint Paul I swear,*  
*I will not dine until I see it done.*      Act iii. Sc. 4.

What are we to understand by this adjuration of S. Paul ? Is there an allusion in it to what we read in Acts xxiii. 12 ?

Certain of the Jews banded together, and *bound themselves under a curse*, saying that they would *neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul*.

And was there some confusion in our poet's recollection of the circumstances, or remembering them aright, did he still make use of the name of the apostle on their account ? It must be stated, however, that the same wicked king is made to use the same oath on other occasions ; for instance, in the scene before the Battle of Bosworth :—

*By the Apostle Paul, shadows to-night  
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard*



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Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers,  
Armed in proof, and led by shallow Richmond.

Act v. Sc. 3.

Why this oath should have been assigned no less than five times to King Richard III., but to no one else, in this play, and yet should not be found so much as once in any other, I am unable to explain; nor am I aware that the fact has been noticed by any of the critics.

We know how S. Paul has ‘protested’ of himself with reference to his daily life of mortification, of hardship and self-denial :—

I die daily.                            1 Cor. xv. 31.

The same character is given in *Macbeth*, by Macduff, to the mother of Malcolm, whom he is addressing :—

Thy royal father  
Was a most sainted king : the queen, that bore thee,  
Oftener upon her knees than on her feet,  
*Died every day she lived.\**                            Act iv. Sc. 3.

Moreover, we know how the same great apostle has protested also, that neither in his own teaching, nor in the promises of God, through Christ, is there any uncertainty, any vacillation, any saying of both

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\* Compare the character of the saintly Queen Margaret as given by her biographer and confessor, Turgot, Bishop of S. Andrews. Shakspeare seems to have confounded, whether purposely or not, the character of Margaret, who was Malcolm’s *wife*, with that of his *mother*.

‘yea and nay.’ 2 Cor. i. 17–20. And so king Lear, complaining of the treatment he had received from his unnatural daughter:—

To say *ay*, and *no*, to every thing I said! *Ay and no too was no good divinity.*  
Act iv. Sc. 6.

Once more: Prospero says to Miranda, in the *Tempest*:—

The direful spectacle of the wreck which touch'd  
The very virtue of compassion in thee,  
I have with such provision in mine art  
So safely ordered, that there is no soul—  
*No, not so much perdition as an hair,*  
Betid to any creature in the vessel  
Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink.

Act i. Sc. 2.

And Ariel afterwards reports, ‘Not a hair perished.’ In a note upon this passage, it has been suggested, with good reason, by Mr. Holt White, that Shakespeare may have had in his mind the hortatory speech of S. Paul to the ship's company, where he assures them that, though they were to suffer shipwreck :

There shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.  
Acts xxvii. 34.





## CHAPTER II.

### *Of Shakspeare's Religious Principles and Sentiments derived from the Bible.*

**W**E are now to enter upon that which is the most important, and, I trust, will be found the most interesting part of our undertaking. We are to show how scriptural, and consequently how true and just, are the conceptions which Shakspeare entertained of the being and attributes of God, of His general and particular Providence, of His revelation to man, of our duty towards Him and towards each other, of human life and of human death, of time and of eternity—in a word, of every subject which it most concerns us as rational and responsible beings to conceive aright.

#### *Sect. I. Of the Being and Nature of God.*

To begin, then, with the titles and attributes of God. Among the names by which He is revealed



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**to us in Scripture, are these: The Lord of Hosts,  
the King Immortal, the King of Kings.**

In the *First Part of King Henry VI.* the Bishop of Winchester, Cardinal Beaufort, thus speaks of the deceased King Henry V. in the presence of his corpse, lying in state:—

He was a king, blessed of the KING OF KINGS,\*  
The battles of the LORD OF HOSTS he fought.

Act i. Sc. 1.

And, in the *Second Part of King Henry IV.*, Prince Henry to his father lying on his death-bed :—

**Act iv. Sc. 4.**

Among the attributes of God, we have been taught by revelation that He knows† all things; that He sees all things, even our most secret thoughts; that He neither slumbers, nor sleeps; and that His Providence is over all His works.

Accordingly our poet speaks of Him, as 'the High ALL SEER,' in *King Richard III.* Act v. Sc. 1; and even in *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, where the characters are Heathen, we read of—

Powers  
That give Heaven countless eyes to view men's acts.  
Act i. Sc. 1

\* See also *King Richard III.*, quoted below, Sect. 8.

<sup>†</sup> On the Divine omniscience. See below, Ch. iii. Sect. 9.

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Truly, therefore, is it said by Helena to the King of France :—

It is not so with HIM THAT ALL THINGS KNOWS,  
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows ;  
But most it is presumption in us, when  
The help of Heaven we count the act of men.

*All's well that ends well.* Act ii. Sc. 1.

Justly, too, does Hermione express her confidence when falsely accused :—

If powers divine  
Behold our human actions, *as they do*,  
I doubt not then but innocence shall make  
False accusation blush, and tyranny  
Tremble at patience. *Winter's Tale*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

Nor was it without reason that Laertes, seeing and hearing proofs of the madness of his sister Ophelia, appealed to the divine compassion :—

Do you see this, O God? *Hamlet*, Act iv. Sc. 5.

Nor, again, that Queen Elizabeth, wife of King Edward IV., after the murder of her children, the two young Princes in the Tower, should thus expostulate :—

Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs,  
And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?  
When did'st Thou sleep, when such a deed was done?  
*K. Richard III.* Act iv. Sc. 4.

Nor, once more, that Queen Katharine should protest against the two Cardinals who had lent

themselves to accomplish her divorce from King Henry VIII.:—

Ye have angels' faces ; but *Heaven knows your hearts.*

*K. Henry VIII.* Act iii. Sc. 1.

It may be that the striking description of Divine Providence, which we read in *Troilus and Cressida*, is pitched too high for heathen characters (a subject of which I shall have occasion to speak presently), but if admissible there at all, it could not be better placed than it is in the mouth of Ulysses :—

The providence that's in a watchful state,  
Finds bottom in the uncomprehensive deeps ;  
Keeps place with thought, and almost, *like the gods,*  
Does *tboseughts unveil* in their dumb cradles.\*

*Act iii. Sc. 3.*

In a note upon this passage, Mr. Henley asks, ‘Is there not here some allusion to the sublime description of the Divine Omnipresence in the 139th Psalm?’ However this question may be answered, there will be no doubt in other passages that our poet’s views of the providence, goodness, and justice of God were drawn directly from Holy Scripture. Thus, where Hamlet says—

There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow—

*Act v. Sc. 2.*

we cannot doubt of the poet’s allusion to our Lord’s words :—

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. *Matt. x. 29.*

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\* To be pronounced, probably, as a trisyllable.



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Nor again, where good old Adam, in *As you like it*,  
says to Orlando :—

I have five hundred crowns,  
The thrifty hire I saved under your father,

Take that : and *He that doth the ravens feed,*  
*Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,*  
Be comfort to my age !

Act ii. Sc. 3.

can we fail to perceive that our poet had in mind  
both the Psalmist and the Evangelist ; the Psalmist,  
who writes of God, that

He feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him.

Ps. cxlvii. 9.

and the Evangelist, who records our Lord's words :

Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they  
reap, nor gather into barns, yet your Heavenly Father feedeth  
them.

Matt. vi. 26.

From such an image it was an easy step for one  
with Shakspeare's imagination to moralize as he does  
in the following lines, spoken by King Henry VI.  
to the Duke of Suffolk :—

But what a point, my lord, your falcon made,  
And what a pitch she flew above the rest !  
To see how *God in all his creatures works !*  
Yea, man and birds are fain\* of climbing high.

K. Henry VI. 2nd Part, Act ii. Sc. 1.

And equally easy was it for a mind of Shakspeare's  
versatility to make a wicked man apply conversely  
the doctrine of God's goodness in His general pro-

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\* Fond.

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vidence, as does King Richard III.—the doctrine, I mean, which we read also in the Sermon on the Mount, that our Heavenly Father

maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Matt. v. 45.

*K. Ricb.* Give me a calendar.

Who saw the sun to-day?

*Ratcliff.* Not I, my lord.

*K. Ricb.* Then he despairs to shine; for, by the book, He should have brav'd the east an hour ago: A black day will it be to somebody.—

*Ratcliff,*—

*Ratc.* My lord?

*K. Ricb.* The sun will not be seen to-day; The sky doth frown and lour upon our army. I would these dewy tears were from the ground. Not shine to-day! Why, what is that to me, More than to Richmond? for *the self-same Heaven That frowns on me, looks sadly upon him.*

*K. Richard III.* Act v. Sc. 3.

In like manner, as the Bible teaches us that 'God is no respecter of persons,' Acts x. 34; that He 'accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they all are the work of His hands,' Job xxxiv. 19; so our poet represents the same truth alike in graceful verse and vigorous prose:—

*Perdita.* I was not much afraid: for once, or twice, I was about to speak, and tell him plainly, The self-same sun that shines upon his court, Hides not his visage from our cottage, but Looks on alike. *Winter's Tale,* Act iv. Sc. 3.

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*K. Henry* (in disguise). Though I speak it to you, I think the king is but a man, as I am : The violet smells to him as it doth to me ; the element shows to him as it doth to me ; all his senses have but human conditions : his ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man.

*King Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 1.

But this assertion of the general providence and common goodness of God, as we find them asserted in Scripture, does not prevent our poet from appealing confidently to the Divine Justice,\* as an unerring arbiter and maintainer of the right. Thus Elizabeth, Queen of King Edward IV., avows,

Just is God, to right the innocent.

*King Richard III.* Act i. Sc. 2.

Again ; it is in the spirit in which Laban said to Jacob,

See, God is witness betwixt me and thee—Gen. xxxi. 50.  
that Malcolm says to Macduff :—

God above

Deal between thee and me. *Macbeth*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

And the double lesson which is taught in the following passage, viz. that kings are not to be deposed by their subjects,† and that, acting rightly, we may depend upon the Divine protection, is in both respects plainly Scriptural, and therefore true; though in neither case so as to forbid qualification, or exclude exception.

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\* See below, p. 113, and Sect. 5.

† See below, Sect. 15.

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*K. Ricb.* Not all the water in the rough rude sea  
Can wash the balm from an anointed king :  
The breath of worldly men cannot depose  
The deputy elected by the Lord.  
For every man that Bolingbroke hath pressed  
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,  
God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay  
A glorious angel ; then, if angels fight,  
*Weak men must fall ; for Heaven still guards the right.*

*K. Richard II.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

Both sentiments are repeated in the same play—  
the former thus :—

*K. Ricb.* Show us the hand of God  
That hath dismiss'd us from our *stewardship* ;  
For well we know, no hand of blood and bone  
Can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre,  
Unless he do profane, steal, or usurp.      *Ibid.* Sc. 3.

And again :—

*Gaunt.* Let Heaven revenge ; for I may never lift  
An angry arm against His *minister* :—      *Ibid.* Act i. Sc. 2.

which reminds us directly of David's forbearance towards Saul, 1 Sam. xxiv. 6; xxvi. 4. The latter sentiment—viz. that God assists and will avenge 'the right,' sooner or later 'punishing the wrong-doer'—is very significantly indicated in an earlier part of the third scene, where the following dialogue occurs between York and Bolingbroke :—

*Boling.* Mistake not, uncle, further than you should ;

*York.* Take not, good cousin, further than you should,

Lest you mistake : the Heavens are o'er your bead.



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*Boling.* I know it, uncle ; and oppose not myself  
Against their will.

We know with how little truth these last words were spoken. And yet the same Duke of York did not fail still to trace, with reverence and submission, the hand of Providence in the usurpation that ensued :

Heaven hath a hand in these events,  
To whose high will we bound our calm contents.

*Ibid. Act v. Sc. 2.*

It was not so meekly that the spirit of Old John of Gaunt was content to show itself, though exhibiting the same faith in the overruling Providence, but looking also to the just judgment of God :—

Put we our quarrel \* to the will of Heaven ;  
Who when He sees the hours ripe on earth,  
Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads.

*Ibid. Act i. Sc. 2.*

And with equal beauty and propriety Queen Katherine utters the same sentiment in *King Henry VIII.*, addressing the two Cardinals :—

Is this your Christian counsel ? out upon ye !  
*Heaven is above all yet :* † there sits a Judge  
That no king can corrupt.

Act iii. Sc. 1.

\* See Prov. xx. 22, Rom. xii. 19.

† A corresponding sentiment is put by Sophocles with great effect into the mouth of the Chorus addressing Electra :

Θέρσει μοι, Θέρσει, τέκνον·

ἴστι μέγας ἐν οὐρανῷ

Ζεὺς, ὃς ἔφορά πάντα καὶ κρατίνει.

Soph. *Elect.* 173-6.

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 109

And He is the judge 'to whom judgment belongeth,' because He alone is 'set in the throne, judging right,' and discerning all things, as the religious King Henry VI. piously confesses :—

*O Thou, that judgest all things, stay my thoughts;  
If my suspect be false, forgive me, God:  
For judgment only doth belong to THEE.*

*King Henry VI, 2nd Part, Act iii, Sc. 2.*

When the Duke of Albany, in *King Lear*, hears from a messenger that the Duke of Cornwall was 'dead, slain by his servant,' he exclaims:—

On the other hand, the tender mercy and loving kindness of the Divine Being, more especially towards those who need them most, are exhibited by our poet, again and again, in passages which represent the teaching of Scripture no less faithfully. For example; He who

is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widow, Ps. lxviii. 5.

is thus described in *King Richard II.*:

*Duchess.* Where then, alas ! may I complain myself?  
*Gaunt.* To Heaven—*the Widow's Champion and Defence*

**And He who 'giveth sight to the blind,' and 'light**

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to him that is in misery,' thus, in *King Henry VI.*  
*2nd Part* :—

*K. Henry.* Now God be praised, that to believing souls,  
Gives light in darkness,\* comfort in despair. Act ii. Sc. 1.

But, of all others, the well-known speech of Portia,  
in the *Merchant of Venice*, exhibits the Divine attributes  
of mercy and forgiveness most clearly, and  
with the plainest reference to Holy Scripture :—

*Portia.* (to Antonio). Do you confess the bond?  
*Anton.* I do.

*Port.* Then must the Jew be merciful.

*Sbylock.* On what compulsion must I? tell me that.

*Port.* The quality of mercy is not strained:

It droppeth, as† the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath : it is twice‡ blessed ;  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes :  
'Tis mightiest in THE MIGHTIEST ; it becomes



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Should see salvation : we do pray for mercy ;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much,  
To mitigate the justice of thy plea ; •  
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice  
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

*Shylock.* My deeds upon my head ! I crave the law,  
The penalty and forfeit of my bond. Act iv. Sc. 1.

In this last answer of Shylock, our poet has adopted with great propriety a sentiment—viz. ‘my deeds upon my head’—which reminds us, as Mr. Henley has pointed out, of the imprecation of the Jews, addressed to Pilate—

His blood be on us, and on our children. Matt. xxvii. 25.

On the other hand, the concluding part of Portia’s speech called forth from Sir W. Blackstone the remark that to ‘refer the Jew to the Christian doctrine of salvation, and the Lord’s Prayer, is a little out of character.’ The learned judge was probably not aware that the Lord’s Prayer was not composed by our Lord as containing anything which would be new and strange to His disciples, but as putting together, in a short form, all that was most valuable in the Jewish liturgies already known to them. See Lightfoot, vol. ii. p. 159, ad p. 439, and Grotius on S. Matthew, vi. 9; he also refers to Ecclesiasticus xxviii. 2–4 :—

Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee,

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so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a man which is like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins?\*

The Biblical critics, therefore, who, like Burkitt, except the particular clause which Portia refers to, viz. 'as we forgive them that trespass against us,' from the foregoing representation in regard to the origin of the several petitions of the *Lord's Prayer*, have, in all probability, made that single exception without sufficient reason. Besides, it is to be borne in mind that many of the Jews, though they did not accept Christ as their Messiah, yet they did accept Him as 'a teacher come from God.' And certainly it is not correct to suppose that the Christian *Doctrine* of salvation is not also the doctrine of salvation to the faithful Jew.

Upon the opening lines of the same speech of Portia, Mr. Douce has pointed out the resemblance to Ecclesiasticus xxxv. 20:—

Mercy is seasonable in the time of affliction, as clouds of rain in the time of drought.

And the argument drawn by Portia from the need which we all have for the mercy of God is repeated by our poet in the *Second Part of King Henry VI.*, where Lord Say says to the rebels, who are carrying him off to execution:—

Ah, countrymen! if when you make your prayers,

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\* On this subject see below, Sect. 5, and Sect. 9.

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God should be so obdurate as yourselves,  
How would it fare with your departed souls?

Act iv. Sc. 8.

I have been loath to question the propriety of an observation made by so sound a thinker and so well-informed a writer as Judge Blackstone; and now I ought not to quit this portion of my subject without drawing attention to a remark of one whose authority upon matters of this kind is still higher; I mean Dr. Johnson. In a note upon the last scene of *King Lear* he complains that 'our author, *by negligence*, gives his Heathens the sentiments and practices of Christianity.' And Mr. Singer has repeated the remark in his edition of 1826. But I am inclined to doubt whether it is altogether well-founded.\* The lines which appeared to give occasion for it are these:—

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to scourge us.      Act v. Sc. 3.

Now, we meet with the same sentiment in the *Apocryphal Book of Wisdom*:—

For the foolish devices of their wickedness wherewith being deceived they worshipped serpents void of reason and wild beasts, *Thou* didst send a multitude of wild beasts upon them for vengeance, that they might know that *wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished.*      xi. 16.

\* I am glad to find myself supported in my opposition to the disparaging remark of Dr. Johnson, by the high authority of Schlegel, who, in his notice of *King Lear*, observes that Shakspeare lays particular stress on the circumstance that *the Britons of that day were still heathens.*



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And though I cannot now remember any passage of a profane author\* that comes *fully* up to the same sentiment, or nearer to it than what we read in Æschylus (*Agam.*† v. 170, *sqq.*) and Juvenal (*Sat.* i. 142, *sqq.*), yet I have little doubt that such a passage may be found. But with regard to the remark itself, the truth, I believe, is that Shakspeare does, for the most part, make a difference between his Heathen and his Christian characters. For instance, in the very play upon which Johnson's censure is made, viz. *King Lear*, we find the following sentiment, which I very much doubt whether our poet would have allowed any but a Heathen character to utter :—

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods ;—  
They kill us for their sport :                           Act iv. Sc. 1.

lines which Mr. Bowdler has *omitted*, instead of suggesting in a note that they are spoken by one who was not a Christian. Again, I am inclined to think, that in *Coriolanus*, it is *purposely* left a doubtful point whether mercy was an attribute of the Deity or no. I allude to the following dialogue

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\* We have it in St. Chrysostom upon the third Psalm, with a play upon the words, which must be lost in a translation; δοει την της τιμωριας, έκειθεν ή πληγη της τιμωριας.—Vol. v. p. 3.

† Compare the sentiment in *K. Lear*, Act ii. Sc. 4.

‘To wilful men,  
The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters.’

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 115

between Menenius and Sicinius, respecting Coriolanus, towards the close of the play :

*Menenius.* What he bids be done, is finished with his bidding.  
*He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in.*

*Sicinius.* Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

*Menenius.* I paint him in the character.\* Mark what mercy  
his mother shall bring from him. There is no more mercy in him  
than there is milk in a male tiger.      Act v. Sc. 4.

At the same time I must admit that in *Titus Andronicus*, of which the characters are Heathen also, mercy is undoubtedly recognized as a divine attribute, where Tamora, Queen of the Goths, says to Titus :—

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?

Draw near them, then, in being merciful.    Act ii. Sc. 2.

In regard to this passage, however, it may be observed, *first*, that the play in which it occurs is generally allowed not to be Shakspeare's; *secondly*, that the date of the action belongs to a period almost as many centuries *after*, as Coriolanus was *before*, the commencement of the Christian era; and, *thirdly*, that in the interval are to be found, even in heathen authors, passages which fall little, if at all, short of the same sentiment. Take, for example, what Cicero had said in addressing Cæsar on behalf of Ligarius—a passage partly quoted by Mr. Whalley :—

Nihil est tam populare quam bonitas; nulla de virtutibus tuis

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\* That is, to the life, as he is.



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plurimis nec admirabilior nec gravior *misericordia* est. Homines enim ad Deos nullâ re propius accedunt quam salutem hominibus dando.—*Orat. pro Ligario*, c. 12.

There is, however, one play of Shakspeare to which it must, I think, be confessed, that the remark of Johnson is justly applicable, at least in some degree. I allude to *Cymbeline*, where Jupiter is made to say :—

Whom best I love,\* I cross.

Act v. Sc. 4.

And again, in the 1st Scene of the same Act, where Posthumus exclaims :—

Gods! if you

Should have ta'en vengeance on my faults, I never  
Had lived to put on † this: so had you saved  
The noble Imogen to repent, and struck  
Me wretch, more worth your vengeance. But, alack!  
You snatch some hence for little faults; *that's love,*  
*To have them fall no more;* you some permit  
To second ills with ills, each elder worse.

Compare Isaiah lvii. 1,

Merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

Upon the whole, then, while I cannot deny altogether the justice of Dr. Johnson's censure, still I would observe that to draw any *very broad* lines of

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\* There is also a passage in *Othello*, too painful to be quoted, where it has been remarked that reference is made to the doctrine of Scripture, 'Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.'—See Act v. Sc. 2.

† i. e. to incite, instigate.

distinction in the case referred to would have been impossible without giving certain and perhaps just cause for offence ; and therefore to bring an accusation of ‘negligence’ for not doing so, may not unfairly be regarded as somewhat captious and unreasonable.

*SECT. 2. Of the Holy Angels, and of the Fallen.*

A devout invocation for the ministering help of the Holy Angels is not to be confounded with the impiety of addressing them in prayer. The one is encouraged, the other is forbidden in Holy Scripture. Such invocations abound in *Hamlet*, and though the story of that play refers to a period long before the Reformation, and though, on that account, Shakespeare would seem to have intended to represent the characters as tinged, to some extent, with the errors of Romanism,\* yet I am not sure that upon

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\* Thus the Ghost of Hamlet’s father speaks of his being  
‘ Confined to fast in fires,

Till the foul crimes, done in my days of nature,  
Are burnt and purged away ;’      Act i. Sc. 5.

which is the doctrine of purgatory ; and again, of being

‘ Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
Unhousel’d, disappointed, *unanel’d* ;’

that is, without the sacrament of extreme unction. And Hamlet, in addressing the players, Act ii. Sc. 2, swears ‘ By ’r Lady !’ and again in Act iii. Sc. 4. ‘ By the rood.’ Of which oaths Mr. Bowdler omits the former, but not the latter. On the other hand, however, also in the last-named scene, Hamlet says to the Queen :—

‘ Confess yourself to *Heaven*.’



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the point now before us he has transgressed the limits which a sound theology would impose. For instance, there is nothing to object to in the exclamation of Isabella, in *Measure for Measure*,

Oh, you blessed ministers above,  
Keep me in patience! Act v. Sc. 1.

Or of Hamlet, at the sight of the Ghost—

Angels and ministers of grace, defend us! Act i. Sc. 4.  
for,

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation? Heb. i. 14.

And again, when the Ghost reappears in Act iii. Sc. 4 :—

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,  
You heavenly Guards!

Nor is the exclamation of the guilty king, when struggling to repent, and to betake himself to prayer, less appropriate :—

Help, Angels, make assay!  
Bow, stubborn knees! and, heart with strings of steel,  
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!  
All may be well. Act iii. Sc. 3.

And how pious and touching is the farewell of Horatio when Hamlet dies :—

Now cracks a noble heart: Good night, sweet prince;  
And flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest! Act v. Sc. 2.

The singing of Angels, and their loving attendance upon the good at all times, but especially in their last moments, have furnished our poet with beautiful

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and affecting imagery on two other occasions. The former in the *Merchant of Venice*, in the moonlight scene where Lorenzo says to Jessica :—

Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold ;  
There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st,  
But in his motion *like an Angel sings*,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed Cherubims. Act v. Sc. 1.

The latter, in *King Henry VIII.*, where the Duke of Norfolk, speaking of Cardinal Wolsey in reference to the good Queen Katharine, thus testifies to her duty and affection for her unworthy husband :—

He counsels a divorce—a loss of her,  
That, like a jewel, has hung twenty years  
About his neck, yet never lost her lustre ;  
Of her that loves him with that excellence,  
That *Angels love good men with* ; even of her,  
That, when the greatest stroke of fortune falls,  
Will bless the king. Act ii. Sc. 2.

We know from S. Luke xv. 10, what is the great occasion of ‘joy in the presence of the Angels of God.’ It is in accordance with the same revealed truth that our poet sings :—

Then is there mirth in heaven,  
When earthly things made even  
Atone\* together. *As you like it*, Act v. Sc. 4.

On the other hand we find a well-known passage in *Measure for Measure*, which represents the

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\* See above, p. 31.

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Angels as 'weeping' over the pride and follies of  
men—*

Man, proud man,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven  
As make the Angels weep :—                   Act ii. Sc. 2.

where Theobald has a note, in which he speaks of this notion as Rabbinical, and quotes from Grotius on S. Luke: ‘Ob peccatum flentes Angelos inducunt Hebræorum magistri.’

Again, the notion of Guardian Angels has been introduced by our poet in *King Henry IV. 2nd Part*—

For the boy—there is a good Angel about him ;  
Act ii. Sc. 2.

conformably to the teaching of the New Testament, more particularly with reference to the young ; see Matt. xviii. 10, and Bishop Bull’s Works, Vol. i. p. 301. But where, in the same play, Act i. Sc. 2, the Chief Justice says to Falstaff, ‘ You follow the young prince up and down like his *ill angel*;’ our poet was either drawing merely upon his own imagination, or from what he had read respecting the belief of the heathen in genii or dæmons ; a belief of which he has made use in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act ii. Sc. 3; and again in *Macbeth*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

It is an opinion held by tradition in the Church, rather than directly derived from Scripture, that pride, or ambition, was the sin which led to the fall of Satan and his associate angels. To this opinion

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our poet has referred in the well-known farewell speech of Cardinal Wolsey to his servant Cromwell, afterwards the celebrated Earl of Essex :—

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition ;  
By that sin fell the Angels ; how can man, then,  
*The image of his Maker*, hope to win by 't ?

*King Henry VIII.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

In a previous part of the same scene, Wolsey had soliloquized to the same effect, using the same comparison, with the addition of the fearful consideration that such a fall is without hope :—

O ! how wretched  
Is that poor man, that hangs on princes' favours !  
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,  
That sweet aspect of princes, and their \* ruin,  
More pangs and fears than wars or women have :  
And when he falls, *be falls like Lucifer,*  
Never to hope again.

The simile in this last passage is evidently formed upon *Isaiah xiv. 12*,

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the morning ;

where the well-known Oriental figure of speech, in which the overthrow of kingdoms is represented by the falling or eclipse of the Heavenly Bodies, is applied prophetically to the downfall of the King of Babylon. But there is no Scriptural authority for giving the name of Lucifer, or Morning Star, to

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\* i. e. Their displeasure, producing overthrow.



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Satan, as our poet has given it above, and elsewhere.\* The misapplication of the name, however, if it is to be considered such, did not originate with our poet. On the contrary, we find that in very early times † the Prophet Isaiah was understood to speak in that place of the evil spirit ; and long before Shakspeare the name Lucifer had been, in consequence, popularly so applied. Mr. Malone quotes very appositely from Churchyard's *Legend of Cardinal Wolsey* (published in Higgin's *Mirrour for Magistrates*, 1527)—

Your fault not half so great as was my pride ;  
For which offence fell Lucifer‡ from the skies.

The same chapter of Isaiah represents Lucifer as having said in his heart (v. 13)—

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, *in the sides of the north* : and Steevens has quoted these last words to explain a speech of La Pucelle (the Maid of Orleans) in the *First Part of King Henry VI.* :—

The regent conquers and the Frenchmen fly,—  
Now help, ye charming spells, and pariahs ;  
And ye choice spirits that admonish me,  
And give me signs of future accidents ! [*Tbunder*].

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\* Viz. in *King Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 7, and in *King John*, Act iv. Sc. 3, where he is styled 'Prince Lucifer.' In the former passage, the appellation is coupled with that of *Belzebub*, which occurs also in *Macbeth*, Act ii. Sc. 3, and in *Twelfth Night*, Act v. Sc. 1.

† e. g. By Tertullian.—See *Advers. Marcion.* Lib. v. pp. 475, 482.

‡ See also *Christian Year*, 3rd Sunday in Lent.

You speedy helpers that are substitutes  
Under the lordly *monarch of the north*,  
Appear, and aid me in this enterprise! Act v. Sc. 3.

Compare S. Paul, Eph. ii. 2, where we read of 'the Prince of the power of the air.'

In a scene which shows that Shakspeare possessed a remarkable insight into the Scotch character, and designed to exhibit it, more especially in Malcolm, the son of the murdered king, we read :—

Angels are bright still, tho' the brightest fell.  
*Macbeth*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

And then became most deformed. So our poet speaks of 'the fiend' in *King Lear*, Act iv. Sc. 2; of 'the common enemy of man,' in *Macbeth*, Act iii. Sc. 1, and in *Twelfth Night*, Act iii. Sc. 4. And he follows up the idea in *King Henry V.* :—

What is it then to me, if impious war,  
*Arrayed in flames*, like to the *prince of fiends*,  
Do, with his *smircb'd complexion*, all fell feats  
Enlink'd to waste and desolation? Act iii. Sc. 3.

Again, Satan is described, in the terms of Scripture, as the 'Prince of Darkness,' in *King Lear*, Act iii. Sc. 3, and in *All's well*, &c., Act iv. Sc. 5; also, in the latter place, as 'the Prince of the World;' and by implication, as 'the Father of Lies,' in *King Henry IV. 1st Part*, where Hotspur says to Glendower :—

And I can teach thee, coz, to shame *the devil*,  
By *telling truth*. Act iii. Sc. 1.

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Moreover, he is represented as misapplying Scripture in the speech of Gloster, quoted above (p. 66), and as a 'slanderer,' or false accuser, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act v. Sc. 5, and finally as 'the Tempter,' in *Comedy of Errors*, Act iv. Sc. 3 :

Satan, avoid ! I charge thee, tempt me not !

The passage of St. Peter,

Be sober, be vigilant : because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour ;  
1 Pet. v. 8.

was plainly in our poet's mind, in *King Henry V.*, where the king says to the traitor Lord Scroop :

If that same *dæmon*, that hath gull'd thee thus,  
Should *with his lion gait walk the whole world*,  
He might return to vasty Tartar\* back  
And tell *the legions*,† I can never win  
A soul so easy as that Englishman's.      Act ii. Sc. 2.

The power which we learn from S. Paul that Satan possesses of 'transforming himself into an angel of light,' 2 Cor. xi. 14, is ascribed to him in *Hamlet*.

The devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape.      Act ii. Sc. 2.‡

And again in *Love's Labour's lost*, Act iv. Sc. 3 :—

Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light.

\* i. e. Tartarus.

† See Mark v. 9. and comp. *Twelfth Night*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

‡ See also the doubtful passage in Act iii. Sc. 4, 'That monster custom,' &c.

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And again, with the addition that such deceitful disguises are most used when the worst temptations are to be practised, in *Othello* :—

When devils will their blackest sins put on,  
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows.

Act ii. Sc. 3.

But the Scripture quoted above is alluded to still more expressly in another passage, where our poet applies it to abandoned women, whom the Devil instigates, while they act as tempters, and do his work by the destruction which they bring upon body and soul :—

*It is written*, they appear to men like Angels of light.  
*Comedy of Errors*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

Once more, the Satanical artifice by which a partial statement of truth may be made subservient to the introduction of deadly error is thus exhibited :—

Oftentimes to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths ;  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us  
In deepest consequence. *Macbeth*, Act i. Sc. 3.

**SECT. 3. *Of God's Goodness in Creation, and in the Redemption of Man.***

How comprehensive is the view which our poet has taken of the goodness of creation in all its stages, from the composition of the simplest herb up to the crowning work of all—the soul of man !

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And how natural the transition from the rising of day out of night, of light out of darkness, to the reproduction of all things out of the earth, to which they fall and sink as into a grave ! How just, also, and how Scriptural, the representation, that though all things were made ' very good ' by their Creator, His creature, man, has the power of perverting them to evil, and will abuse that power, or will keep it in subjection, according as he follows the guiding of his own free but corrupted will, which brought death into the world, or obeys the dictates of conscience and of the Spirit of grace ! I allude to the scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, before Friar Laurence's cell, where the friar, entering with a basket, thus soliloquizes :—

The grey-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night,  
Checking the Eastern clouds with streaks of light ;  
And flecked \* darkness like a drunkard reels,  
From forth day's path, and Titan's fiery wheels :—

Was our poet indebted here to that bold figure of the prophet Isaiah, ' The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage ?'—xxiv. 20.

Now ere the sun advance his burning eye,  
The day to cheer, and night's dank dew to dry,  
I must fill up this osier cage of ours  
With baleful weeds and precious-juiced flowers.  
The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb ;

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\* Spotted, streaked.

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What is her burying-grave, that is her womb ;  
And from her womb children of divers kinds  
We, sucking on her natural bosom find ;  
Many for many virtues excellent,  
*None but for some*, and yet all different.  
O ! mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities ;  
*For nought so vile that on the earth doth live,*  
*But to the earth\* some special good doth give.*  
Nor aught so good, but strained from that fair use,  
Revols from true birth, stumbling on abuse :  
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied ;  
And vice sometimes by action dignified :—

i. e. by the manner, or circumstances in which it is done. We must remember that a Franciscan Friar is speaking ; but our poet might have had in mind cases like that of Jacob deceiving his father, or Jael killing Sisera :—

Within the infant rind of this small flower,  
Poison hath residence, and medicine power ;  
For this, being smelt, with that part† cheers each part,  
Being tasted, slugs all senses with the heart.  
Two such opposed foes encamp them still  
*In man as well as herbs—grace and rude will :*  
And where the worser is predominant,  
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.

Act ii. Sc. 3.

What a depth of theological truth lies in this last couplet ! It is the teaching of S. Paul—‘ If ye live after the flesh,’ the *φρόνημα σαρκὸς*—the *rude*

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\* i. e. To the inhabitants of the earth.

† i. e. The sense that smells.

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*will*—‘ye shall die,’ Rom. viii. 13; and of S. James, ‘when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death,’ i. 15; doctrine which our poet again delivers in *King Henry IV. 2nd Part* :—

The time shall come, that foul sin, gathering head,  
Shall break into corruption.      Act iii. Sc. 1.

But to continue the subject more immediately before us. There are times when the sight of all this goodness and beauty of creation, and even the contemplation of man himself, so ‘fearfully and wonderfully made,’ has no sufficient power to remove the weight which presses upon the mind; and in such a mood was Hamlet, when he testified at once to the excellency of what we see above us and around us, and still more of what we ourselves are, and at the same time to the inability of all to give his spirit the relief it sought :—

Indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a steril promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave\* o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man!† How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a God! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither.      Act ii. Sc. 2.

\* Fine. See above, Pt. I. ch. ii. p. 32.

† Comp. Act iii. Sc. 2, where Hamlet speaks to the players.

And why was this? It was from the knowledge of sin, which had marred all. There had been

A foul defacer of God's handiwork,\*

as Queen Margaret calls the wicked King Richard III. in the play so named, Act iv. Sc. 4. And Hamlet knew full well that not only the commission of crime, but the unprofitable employment of our existence, is a contravention of the purpose for which we were created. Hear what he says in a later scene:—

What is a man,  
If his chief good, and market† of his time  
Be but to sleep, and feed? A beast, no more.  
Sure, He that made us with such large discourse—  
Looking before, and after—gave us not  
That capability and god-like reason,  
To fust‡ in us unused.

Act iv. Sc. 4.

Our poet's meaning in the use of the word 'discourse' in this passage may be seen by an expression which occurs before, viz. in Act i. Sc. 2:—

O! heaven! a beast that wants *discourse of reason*  
Would have mourned longer.

And I know of no better explanation of the word in this sense than that which may be gathered from Cicero *de Officiis*, lib. i. c. 4:—

Homo autem, quod *rationis* est particeps (*per quam consequentia cernit, causas rerum videt, earumque progressus et quasi*

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\* A line omitted by Mr. Bowdler, most needlessly.

† Profit.           ‡ Grow mouldy.



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antecessiones non ignorat, similitudines comparat, rebusque praesentibus adjungit atque adnectit futuras), facile totius vite *cursus* videt, ad eamque degendam præparat res necessarias.

But did our poet think that 'discourse of reason,' however 'large,' could avail to remove the depression which arises, but too often, from a sense of unprofitableness, and from a knowledge of sin, both in ourselves and others? No! We have the witness of his last will and testament to the contrary. From that we learn where his hope was fixed. There we read:

First, I commend my soul into the hands of God, my Creator; hoping and assuredly believing, *through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour*, to be made partaker of life everlasting.

It is in accordance with this Christian hope, this assured belief, that Clarence is made to say to the men who had been sent to murder him in the Tower:—

I charge you, as you hope to have *redemption*,  
*By Christ's dear blood, shed for our grievous sins*,  
That you depart, and lay no hands on me.

*King Richard III. Act i. Sc. 4.*

And again, our blessed Lord is spoken of, in *King Richard II.* as

The world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son.

*Act iv. Sc. 1.*

And again, in *King Henry VI. 2nd Part*, as

That dread King that took our state upon Him  
*To free us from His Father's wrathful curse.*

*Act iii. Sc. 2.*

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And in *King Henry IV. 1st Part*, Palestine is described as

Those holy fields,  
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,  
*Whicb, fourteen hundred years ago, were nailed*  
*For our advantage on the bitter cross.* Act i. Sc. 1.

It is remarkable, too, how fully our poet recognized the glorious truth, which too many, alas! have endeavoured to obscure, viz. that Redemption is no partial gift; that as the disease, which it was mercifully designed to cure, is universal, so the application of the remedy is universal also: according to the teaching of S. Paul, that

As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation—and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;—even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. Rom. v. 18 and 12.

The universality of the disease is indicated in *Measure for Measure*, where the virtuous Isabella thus speaks to Angelo, the wicked Lord Deputy, in the Duke's absence:—

Alas! Alas!  
Why, *all the souls that\* are*, were forfeit once;  
And He that might the vantage best have took,  
*Found out the remedy.* How would you be,  
If He, which is the top of judgment, should  
But judge you as you are? O think on that;  
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,  
*Like man new made.* Act ii. Sc. 2.

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\* The common reading is 'were,' which is interpreted to refer to Adam and Eve; but I agree with Warburton in substituting 'are.' To confine the meaning to Adam and Eve, appears to me to render what follows *illogical*.



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The critics—Warburton, Johnson, Malone, and Holt White—have severally offered different explanations of these last words; but I am inclined to think they have all missed the poet's meaning. 'Like man new made,' means, I believe, *like man redeemed*, \* *like the redemption of man*; and the words are to be understood as put, *per epexegesin*, in reference to the entire clause in the preceding line. Thus, Isabella says in effect:—' Your merciful act will be like the mercy shown in the redemption of the world, whereby mankind, lost and condemned to death (as her brother Claudio was), are restored to life.' And so the universality of the remedy will also be implied in those words, as it is plainly stated in these which follow, from *King Henry VI. 2nd Part*:

Now, by the death of Him that *died for all*!

Act i. Sc. 1.

This all-important subject—the extent of evil, and its cure—will receive further elucidation in the next and subsequent sections.

### SECT. 4. *Of Human Life, and of 'The World.'*

It was worthy of the position which Wolsey had held in church and state, that his voice should be made the instrument, at the close of his career, to recommend, in a few words, all the great points of

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\* Young, in *The Complaint*, Night iv., speaks of man 're-made' for 'redeemed.'

the highest Christian morality, however he himself had fallen short in his own practice of them. I refer to the speech in which he gave his final charge to Cromwell :—

Love thyself last. *Cberish those bearts that bate\* tbee.*  
Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,  
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not.  
*LET ALL THE ENDS THOU AIM'ST AT BE THY COUNTRY's,*  
*THY GOD's, AND TRUTH's; then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,*  
*Thou fall'st a blessed martyr.*

*King Henry VIII.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

Here we have duty to God, to our neighbour, to our country ; renunciation of self ; love of enemies ; the practical study of truth, of justice, of integrity, of peaceableness ; all these strung together like so many pearls upon one thread, in a manner that may remind us of S. Paul's delineation of charity, or of the summaries of moral duty, which we read in the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and in the concluding chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Nor was it less worthy of the highest officer in a king's household, the Lord Chamberlain Polonius, that in sending forth his son into the world he should thus give him lessons for life ; lessons which again may remind us of those given to their respective sons, under circumstances more or less similar,

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\* Warburton proposed to read 'wait,' for reasons which rightly, I think, appeared unsatisfactory to Steevens.

by King James, by Sir Walter Raleigh, by Lord Burleigh, by the Earl of Strafford,\* and to his nephew, afterwards Lord Camelford, by the Earl of Chatham :—

There—my blessing† with you ;—

[*Laying his hand upon Laertes' head.*] §

And these few precepts in thy memory  
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.  
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.  
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel.

Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice.  
Take each man's ‡ censure, but reserve thy judgment.

Neither a borrower, nor a lender be :  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend ;  
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

we may fancy that we hear an echo to the precepts of S. James:—

Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.  
James i. 19.

And it would be easy to produce Scriptural parallels to other parts of the same passage, especially from the Book of Proverbs; but in so doing I should be losing sight of the object which I have now more immediately in hand. The design of this section is not to enter into the details, of which human life and Christian duty are made up, but to prepare the way for entering upon such details in the sections that are to follow. A general view has been taken of the subject proposed; and now, before we proceed further into particulars, it will be necessary to notice some abstruser points which lie at the root of all moral action for us Christians; such as the corruption of nature, already touched upon in the last section; the need of grace; and the theory of the formation of moral habits: and then to say something of ‘the world,’ and of life, as it is seen at different stages and in several conditions; and of the duty of preserving the gift which God has given us.

How beautiful is the description, in *Winter's Tale*, given by Polixenes, of the innocent boyhood of himself and Leontes, which, with poetical exaggeration, he represents to have been free

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from all other taint, save only that of original  
sin :—

We were as twinn'd lambs, that did frisk i' the sun,  
And bleat the one at the other : what we changed,  
Was innocence for innocence ; we knew not  
The doctrine\* of ill-doing, nor dream'd  
That any did : had we pursued that life,  
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd  
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd Heaven  
Boldly, *Not guilty ; the imposition clear'd*  
*Hereditary ours.*

Act i. Sc. 2.

That is, provided the guilt imposed upon us by descent from Adam had not made us sinners. And the effect of this taint is such, and so universal, especially upon the thoughts of the heart, that Solomon enquires—

*Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin ?*      Prov. xx. 9.

In like manner, Iago asks—

Where's that palace whereinto foul things  
Sometimes intrude not ? Who has a breast so pure,  
But some uncleanly apprehensions,  
Keep leets† and law-days, and in sessions sit,  
With meditations lawful ?      *Othello*, Act iii. Sc. 3.

This is the source from which offences spring ;  
and the saying of Williams to King Henry—

All offences, my liege, come from the heart—

*K. Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 8.

is no other than the teaching of our Lord himself,

\* To be read as a trisyllable.

† Meetings in court.

in the Gospels. See Matt. xv. 18; Mark vii. 21. And the heart being thus universally corrupt, we are at no loss to account for the universality of actual sin; as the pious King Henry VI. (see below, Sect. 16) has testified:

Forbear to judge, for *we are sinners all.*

In reference to this point, there is a remarkable passage in *Hamlet*, which has caused no little stir among the commentators. It is in the dialogue between Hamlet and Polonius in Act ii. Sc. 2:—

*Ham.* I would you were so honest a man.

*Pol.* Honest, my lord?

*Ham.* Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

*Pol.* That's very true, my lord.

*Ham.* For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god, kissing carrion—

The sense is there broken off; but with the help of Warburton's emendation\* of the text—an emendation which Johnson commends so highly as to say of it, that 'it almost sets the critic on a level with the author'—we can scarcely doubt that the poet's meaning was (as Warburton explains it) to vindicate the Providence of God from the false conclusions to which the prevalence of evil in the world

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\* The only difficulty in accepting it arises from the illative particle 'For.' And I am inclined to think we should read 'Nor;' and then the inference would be *Nor is God to blame for this, any more than the sun, &c.*



### *Religious Principles and*

... give rise, and to represent the  
are responsible for the corruption in  
... in the sun is responsible for the  
... in a dead dog.\* In a latter part of  
... were is another dialogue between  
... of Polonius, in which the truest Christian  
... recurring upon the same point, is again  
... Hamlet has told Polonius to 'see the  
... bestowed,' or, in other words, 'well

... will use them according to their deserts.  
... man! use every man after his desert,  
... learning? Use them after your own measure;  
... they deserve, the more merit is in you

... more, in Act III. Sc. 1, Hamlet says to

... different honest: but yet I could accuse me of  
... were better my mother had not borne me.  
... What should such fellows as I do crawling be-  
... even! *We are errant knaves all:* Believe

... et could speak after this fashion, how  
... men the misanthrope!

Who lives that's not  
... knaves?

*Timon of Athens, Act ii. Sc. 1.*

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\* This is the same language in *Measure for Measure*, Act ii. Sc. 2.

and again :—

All is oblique :

There's nothing level in our cursed natures,  
But direct villainy.

Act iv. Sc. 3.

A statement painfully strong, and yet not stronger, nor so strong, coming from a heathen, as that of S. Paul, in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, or of the Psalmist whom he there quotes. A more temperate, and therefore, more exact representation of human frailty, as arising partly from natural corruption and partly from our own wilfulness, occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*; but, though put also into the mouth of a heathen, it could scarcely have been written by one who was not familiar with Holy Scripture :

*Something may be done that we will not ;  
And sometimes we are devils to ourselves,  
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers,  
Presuming on their changeful potency.* Act iv. Sc. 4.

The reader will be reminded of James i. 14; and of Rom. vii. 15–23; a passage which was evidently present to our poet's thoughts on another occasion, viz. in *Hamlet*, where the sentiment, 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me,' is transferred by Hamlet to his assumed madness, Act v. Sc. 2. How just, and like S. Paul again, are the reflections which pass between the two lords, in *All's well*, &c., respecting the origin, the course, and the result of wicked actions :

1st Lord. Now Heaven delay our rebellion : *as we are in ourselves, how weak are we !*



*2nd Lord.* Merely our own traitors. And as in the common course of all treasons, we still see them reveal themselves, till they attain to their abhorred ends; so he, that in this action contrives against his own nobility, in his proper stream o'erflows\* himself.

Act iv. Sc. 3.

Our poet is still in the same vein, and gives the same testimony, in *Measure for Measure* :—

Our natures do pursue,  
(Like rats that ravin down their proper bane),  
A thirsty evil, and when we drink, we die:—

Act i. Sc. 3.

i. e. men are destroyed, when they suffer themselves to be enticed by unlawful pleasure, as rats are killed by swallowing that which afterwards drives them to drink themselves to death.

And, as the Church of England testifies, in her Ninth Article, ‘This infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated ;’ a truth which our poet, a faithful son of the Church of England, thus represents :—

Virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock, but we shall relish of it [i. e. of the old stock.] *Hamlet*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

But if Shakspeare's views of the corruption of human nature were thus clear, and formed upon the teaching of Holy Scripture, so also was his perception of the method of its recovery, through Divine grace, aiding—not superseding—our own best endeavours. This has been already shown in part,

\* Johnson interprets this to mean 'betrays his own secrets in his own talk.'

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and will be seen more fully in the next section, when we come to speak of the doctrine of repentance. In the mean time, that we are not able of ourselves, and in our own strength alone, to subdue the evil which is so natural to us, we may gather sufficiently from *Love's Labour's lost*, where Biron declares that

Every man with his affects\* is born,  
Not by might mastered, but *by special grace*.

Act i. Sc. 1.

Shakspeare, no doubt, had learnt his Catechism well, and would remember the words—‘ My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve Him, without His *special grace*.’ At the same time, the King of Navarre had reminded us in a former part of that same scene that the battle against evil is to be fought, though not in dependence upon our own strength, yet with the employment of our own best exertions, when he addressed the three lords, his attendants :—

Brave conquerors! for so you are,  
That war against your own *affections*,  
And the huge army of the world’s desires.

Meanwhile, not even Aristotle, or Bishop Butler himself, has taught the theory and practice of the formation of moral habits more accurately than our poet has done, where Hamlet, seeking to disengage

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\* i. e. With his ‘affections and lusts.’



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the Queen, his mother, from all intercourse with her wicked and incestuous husband, thus addresses her :—

Refrain to-night,  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness,  
To the next abstinence : the next more easy :  
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,  
And either curb the devil, or throw him out  
With wondrous potency.      *Hamlet, Act iii. Sc. 4.*

But our poet would remind us further, that, if a virtuous habit is to be formed, the good purpose which is to lead to it must not be trifled with :—

For  
Purpose is but the slave to memory ;  
Of violent birth, but poor validity.      *Ibid. Sc. 2.*

And, therefore, he justly argues :—

That we would do,  
We should do, when we would ; for this *would* changes,  
And hath abatements and delays as many,  
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents.  
    *Ibid. Act iv. Sc. 7.*

Before we quit this subject, I cannot refrain from noticing how little the mind of Shakspeare appears to have been infected by the Calvinistic and Puritanical leaven which had already begun, in his time, to exercise a strong and spreading influence among his countrymen. It is true he does not shrink—because neither does the Scripture itself shrink—from hinting, more than once, at the



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mysterious subject of God's decrees. Thus we read in *Hamlet*:

And, apparently, with direct reference to the words of S. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, chap. ix. v. 15, 18, our poet writes:—

The words of Heaven—*on whom it will, it will,  
i.e. have mercy)*  
*On whom it will not, so ; yet still 'tis just.*  
*Measure for Measure, Act i. Sc. 3*

At the same time he takes care to explode the pernicious doctrine of fatalism, and the still more monstrous delusions of judicial astrology, which, as Warburton has observed, were also prevalent in that age. Thus Gloster, in *King Lear* :—

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeit of our own behaviour) we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars, *as if we were villains by necessity*; fools by heavenly compulsion; . . . and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on: an admirable reason of . . man, to lay his . . disposition to the charge of a star!

So, too, Helena, in *All's well that ends well*; though she gives us to understand that there is mysterious influence which will be found, on

\* This reading is doubtful: all early authority is in favour of *all*.



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fancied, to thwart or disappoint us when we have been wanting and unfaithful to ourselves :—

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,  
Which we ascribe to Heaven : *the fated sky*  
*Gives us free scope* ; only, doth backward pull  
Our slow designs, *when we ourselves are dull.*

After all, therefore, the truth is, as Cassius states it :—

Men *at some time* are masters of their fates :  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

*Julius Cæsar*, Act i. Sc. 2.

Shakspeare divides ‘the world’ into that which is ‘familiar to us,’ and that which is ‘unknown.’ *King Henry V.* Act iii. Sc. 7. And of that which is familiar to us he, more than once, draws a picture, the colouring of which, however unattractive, must be allowed to be faithfully and severely scriptural :

O God! O God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fye on’t! O fyé! ’tis an unweeded garden,  
That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature,  
Possess it merely.\*

*Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 2.

And again,

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye.

*K. Henry VIII.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

Compare the teaching of the Apostle S. James, iv. 4, and of S. John, 1st Epistle, ii. 15.

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\* i. e. Entirely, absolutely.

One of the worst characteristics of ‘the world,’ as the Scriptures represent it, is the envy and hostility of the wicked against the righteous. See Prov. xxxvii. 32; John xv. 18. So the good old Adam exclaims in *As you like it*—

O! what a world is this, when what is comely  
Envenoms him that bears it :                              Act ii. Sc. 3.

that is, exposes him to the venomous hatred of envious and malicious men. But, if we would see the whole mechanism of ‘the world,’ its pride, its emptiness, its parasitism, its false estimate of men and things, its impatient jostlings for distinction, its forgetfulness of all but what presently strikes the eye, I know of nothing to compare with the dialogue between Achilles and Ulysses, in *Troilus and Cressida*, Act iii. Sc. 3. It is too long to quote; nor is there much in it which admits of direct comparison with Scripture: but the reader who is not acquainted with it will be amply rewarded, if he study it at his leisure.

In passing on to speak of the *varied fortune* and *fleeting character* of the several stages and different conditions of human life, I may first make one remark upon the mode of reckoning time. In Mark xiii. 35, ‘the cock crowing’ is used to specify the time of early morning, which Shakspeare denotes more than once in the same manner, distinguishing also the ‘first’ and the ‘second cock;’ while, in

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*King Richard III.* Act v. Sc. 3, the close of the evening has the name of 'cock shut time,' from a net so called, which was used in the evening twilight to catch woodcocks.

'The web of our life is of a mingled *yarn*, good and bad together.' So writes our poet in *All's well, &c.* Act iv. Sc. 3; and the metaphor has now become so familiar that we scarcely care to trace it to any source; though, if we did, we should probably find none more ancient than Isaiah xxxviii. 12. 'For My life is cut off as by the weaver.\* The same may be said of the images which represent life 'vain as a shadow that declineth,' and transitory 'as a tale that is told;' both of frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture, and both adopted by our poet in *Macbeth*, and elsewhere:—

Life's but a walking† *shadow*—

it is a *tale*,

Told by an idiot.

Act v. Sc. 5.

We find also the comparison, 'life is a shuttle,' in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act v. Sc. 2, which requires Job vii. 6, to interpret it, 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle.' See above, p. 77, *sq.* And as the Psalmist complains, 'Thou hast made

\* I have adopted Bishop Lowth's translation.

† See Ps. xxxix. 16.

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my days as it were *a span long*,' xxxix. 6, P. B. version; so we read in *As you like it*,

How brief the life of man!

The stretching of *a span*

Buckles in his sum of age.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

Such, then, being our life—so short—how nobly apposite to us all are the words of Hotspur!—

O gentlemen, the time of life is short;

To spend that shortness basely were too long,

If life did ride upon a dial's point,

Still ending at the arrival of an hour.

*K. Henry IV. 1st Part, Act v. Sc. 3.*

And in truth it does so, in the estimate of a wise man. Again, such being our life—so transitory, so uncertain,—to ‘fear always,’\* to ‘watch and pray always,’ are Divine precepts, which need nothing to recommend them to a thoughtful mind. Even a heathen poet like Horace saw reason more than enough for unceasing caution and watchfulness:—

Quod quisque vitet, nunquam homini satis

Cautum est in horas:—

And it is *Hecate*, who, in addressing the three witches, is made by Shakspeare to declare:—

You all know security †

Is mortals' chiefest enemy. *Macbeth*, Act iii. Sc. 5.

The well-known passage,‡ in which ‘the world’ is

\* See Prov. xxviii. 14; xxiii. 17.

† See above, p. 42.

‡ In *As you like it*, Act ii. Sc. 7. See also *Merchant of Venice*, Act i. Sc. 1; *Macbeth*, Act v. Sc. 7.

described by Shakspeare as ‘a stage,’ was doubtless derived from no other source than imagination acting upon his own experience as a player ; but the elaborate and melancholy, not to say painful picture of life, which we read in *Measure for Measure*, is no less certainly indebted to the Bible for more than one touch of its colouring. The Duke, disguised as a friar, visits Claudio in prison, when condemned to death, and thus addresses him :—

Reason thus with life,—

If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing  
 That none but fools would keep : *a breath thou art,*  
 Servile to all the skiey influences,  
 That doth\* this habitation, where thou keep'st,  
 Hourly afflict.

Happy thou art not :

For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get ;  
 And what thou hast, forget'st. Thou art not certain ;  
 For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,  
 After the moon. *If thou art rich, thou art poor ;*  
 For, like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,  
 Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,  
 And death unloads thee.

† Thou hast nor youth nor age ;

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\* Thus I venture to read, instead of ‘dost,’ (which Hanmer changed into ‘do’) in preference to Porson’s suggestion of putting the line above in a parenthesis. I take ‘doth’ to be the plural form, which anciently was in common use ; as in ‘Manners *maketh* man.’ Compare Wisdom v. 8, ‘What good *hath* riches, with our vaunting, brought us ?’ though ‘riches’ is there perhaps used as singular, from Fr. *richesse*. A friend recommends to read ‘influence.’

† In the lines here omitted there is an evident reference to 2 Sam. xvi. 11. ‘My son which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life.’

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But as it were, an after dinner's sleep,  
Dreaming on both. Act iii. Sc. 1.

Malone has remarked upon this passage that 'an ass bearing ingots' is an eastern image, and was probably derived from the Scriptures. See Isaiah xxx. 6. But however gloomy the view which our poet might sometimes take of human life, he does not allow us to hesitate respecting the duty imposed upon every man that lives, to do all he can to preserve the precious gift which God has given him.

The single and peculiar life is bound,  
With all the strength and armour of the mind,  
To keep itself from 'noyance. *Hamlet*, Act iii. Sc. 3.

And there is nothing in which he is more emphatic than in representing the act of suicide as a direct violation of the Divine law; first, in that same play—

O! that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter;— Act i. Sc. 2.

Again in *Cymbeline* :—

Against self-slaughter  
There is a prohibition so divine,  
That cravens my weak hand. Act iii. Sc. 4.

I am not aware that such a prohibition is to be found\* in Holy Scripture; and in the latter of these plays any reference to Revelation would have been out of place. The 'canon,' therefore, to which our poet refers must be one of natural religion; and this is confirmed by a similar sentiment being attributed

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\* Unless it be in the Sixth Commandment.



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to Gloster in *King Lear*, and to Brutus in *Julius Cæsar*,\* though, in the latter case, with something of subsequent appearance of contradiction in word, and still more of inconsistency in deed. That such an one as Cleopatra is represented should first call in question the law, and then pronounce it noble to disobey it, is in perfect harmony with her bold bad character :—

Is it sin  
To rush into the secret house of death,  
Ere death dare come to us? . . .  
. . . What's brave, what's noble,  
Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,  
And make death proud to take us.

*Ant. and Cleop. Act iv. Sc. 13.*

and again :—

It is great  
To do that thing that ends all other deeds,  
Which shackles accidents and bolts up change.

*Ibid. Act v. Sc. 2.*

I must not omit to add that great and various as are the merits of *Romeo and Juliet*, the pleasure and admiration excited by that play, and the interest felt in the hero and heroine, are all marred in some degree by the suicide which they both commit,† being Christians, and shortly after they had been united in holy matrimony.

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\* See below, Sect. 13.

† I am surprised that this should have been overlooked by so acute and sound a critic as Schlegel, who speaks of them as 'still appearing enviable' in their deaths.

SECT. 5. *Of Sin and Repentance.*

We have already spoken of the cause of sin, and of its existence, both original and actual, as universal. It follows to trace it in its operation, and then to speak of its necessary corrective—so far as the correction of it lies within our own power and agency—viz. Repentance.

The subtlety of the Tempter, and the craft with which he adapts his temptations, so that he may bring evil out of good, and that virtue itself may be made to minister to sin, for the overthrow of those who could not otherwise be assailed, is very forcibly expressed in *Measure for Measure* :—

O ! cunning enemy, that to catch a saint,  
With saints doth bait thy hook ! most dangerous  
Is that temptation, that doth goad us on  
To sin in loving virtue.

Act ii. Sc. 3.

It was thus that the beloved apostle was tempted to worship the angel, who had shown him, in the Revelation, the things which he had seen and heard (xxii. 8); and countless multitudes of Christians have since been tempted only too successfully to worship the Virgin Mary and other saints, because they remembered not the injunction given on that occasion to St. John, ‘See thou do it not !’

In like manner we are warned of the danger of entering upon evil courses from the insecurity which attends them, from the distraction and instability

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which they introduce into the 'counsels of the heart,' and from the inevitable tendency which the doing of one wrong action has to beget another :—

Alack ! when once our grace we have forgot,  
Nothing goes right; we would, and we would not.

*Measure for Measure*, Act iv. Sc. 4.

And so the wicked King Richard exclaims :—

I am in  
So far in blood, that sin will pluck on sin.

*King Rich. III. Act iv. Sc. 2.*

And the virtuous Pericles, Prince of Tyre, testifies to the same effect :—

One sin I know another doth provoke ;  
Murder's as near to lust as flame to smoke.

*Pericles Prince of Tyre*, Act i. Sc. 1.

It is remarkable that the same holds good of that which is more or less directly the consequence of sin, viz. sorrow, which, according to the proverb, *never comes single.*\*

One sorrow never comes but brings an heir  
That may succeed, as his inheritor. *Ibid. Sc. 4.*

The course by which sin makes us feel, first naked, like Adam and Eve after their fall, then suspicious, then cowardly, is traced by our poet with remarkable accuracy and Scriptural truth; and on the other hand, he has not failed to catch the image by which S. Paul speaks of 'the armour of God'—'the armour of righteousness on the right hand and

\* See below, Sect. 13.

on the left'—as the defence of all who walk uprightly.

There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats,  
For I am *armed* so strong *in honesty*,  
That they pass by me as the idle wind,  
Which I respect not.

*Julius Cæsar*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

What stronger *breastplate* than a *beart untainted*?  
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;  
And he but *naked*, tho' locked up in steel,  
*Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted*.

*King Henry VI. 2nd Part*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

*Suspicion* always haunts the guilty mind;  
The thief doth fear each bush an officer.

*King Henry VI. 3rd Part*, Act v. Sc. 6.

The poetical image in this last line will remind the classical reader of Juvenal, Sat. x. 21;

Motæ ad lunam trepidabis arundinis umbram:—

while the reader of the Bible will recall the fears and suspicions of Herod Antipas, the murderer of John the Baptist, in illustration of the general sentiment.

That 'the righteous are bold as a lion,' that they 'will not be afraid of any evil tidings,' and, on the other hand, that the ungodly are 'brought into great fear even where no fear is,' and that they 'flee when no man pursueth'—these, and such like truths of Holy Scripture, are set forth again and again, in the pages of Shakspeare, with a vividness propor-

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tioned to their moral weight. Thus the Duke says,  
in Measure for Measure :—*

Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful.

Act iii. Sc. 1.

The Lord Say, in *King Henry VI. 2nd Part* :—

The trust I have is in mine innocence,  
And therefore am I bold and resolute. Act iv. Sc. 4.

The 'good Duke' Humphrey of Gloster, in the  
same Play :—

A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.

Act iii. Sc. 1.

The Duke of Albany, in *King Lear* :—

Where I could not be honest,  
I never yet was valiant. Act v. Sc. 1.

And again we are taught, if we would be truly  
valiant, 'not to fear them that kill the body,' pro-  
vided that the heart be kept sound and upright :—

He's truly valiant that can *wisely* suffer  
The worst that man can breathe, and make his wrongs  
His outsides; wear them like his garment, carelessly;  
And ne'er prefer his injuries to his heart  
To bring *it* into danger ;— *Timon of Athens*, Act iii. Sc. 5.

that is, by suffering it to be provoked to uncharita-  
bleness or to revenge. At the same time, there are  
few who *can* show courageousness like that of S. Paul,  
because there are few who exercise themselves as he  
did, 'to have always a conscience void of offence

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* (155)

toward God and toward men,' Acts xxiv. 16.  
'Thus,' as Hamlet truly testifies,

Conscience does make cowards of us all;  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;  
And enterprises of great pith and moment,  
With this regard, their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action;— Act iii. Sc. 1.

a testimony which the guilty queen his mother soon after confirms, speaking from her own experience:—

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
Each toy\* seems prologue to some great amiss; †  
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,  
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.      Act iv. Sc. 5.

And the wicked King Richard III. still more forcibly :—

O! coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain.      Act v. Sc. 3.

The dialogue between the two murderers, whom the same usurper had employed to assassinate his brother, the Duke of Clarence, in the Tower, is an extraordinary instance of our poet's deep acquaintance with the most secret workings of the human heart — such as I know not where to look for in any other, unless it be in the author of the Book of

\* Trifle.

† Disaster.

156 *Shakspeare's Religious Principles and Proverbs*, King Solomon. The 'bloody deed' was not yet committed :—

*1st Murd.* What, if thy conscience come to thee again ?

*2nd Murd.* I'll not meddle with it, it is a dangerous thing ; it makes a man a coward ; a man cannot steal, but it accuseth him ; a man cannot swear, but it checks him ; a man cannot lie with his neighbour's wife, but it detects him.      Act i. Sc 4.

I have not thought it necessary to follow Mr. Bowdler in omitting this last clause, which shows, by the bye, how much our poet's mind was tinctured with the phraseology of Scripture. The phraseology indeed would be of small account, if the imitation of Scriptural language were not accompanied, as it most evidently is, by an honest desire to give effect to the moral lessons which the Bible contains. But the truth is, that not even the Bible itself represents more vividly than our poet has done, not only in single passages but in whole plays, the evil consequences of sin, or shows more plainly how the wicked are confounded by the works of their own hands ; that sooner or later our sin will find us out ; and that it will also most assuredly, sooner or later, be found out itself. How are the evils of ambition made to be seen and read of all men in *King Richard III.* and in *Macbeth* ; the evils of jealousy in *Othello* ; the evils of arrogance and self-will in *Coriolanus* !

Of single passages tending to the same general effect, besides those from *King Lear*, quoted above,

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p. 109 and p. 113, it may suffice to produce what follows.

In *King Richard II.* Act ii. Sc. 1 :—

*York.* What will ensue hereof, there's none can tell;  
But by bad courses may be understood,  
That their events can never fall out good.

In *King Richard III.* Act v. Sc. 1 :—

Thus doth He force the swords of wicked men  
To turn their own points on their masters' bosoms.

In the *Tempest*, Act iii. Sc. 3 :—

*Gonzalo.* All three of them are desperate; their great guilt,  
*Like poison given to work a great time after,*  
Now 'gins to bite the spirits.

In *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 2 :—

*Hamlet.* Foul deeds will rise,  
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

In *King Henry VI. 2nd Part*, Act ii. Sc. 1 :—

*King Henry.* O God, what mischief work the wicked ones,  
Heaping confusion on their own heads thereby!

See Ps. vii. 16; and compare the words of Suffolk to the other lords assembled in the council chamber, with a view to the overthrow of Cranmer:

I told ye all  
When we first put this dangerous stone a rolling,  
Twould fall upon ourselves.

*King Henry VIII.* Act v. Sc. 2.

And lastly, in *Macbeth* we are taught still more plainly, that the evil which we do to others will

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*recoil upon our own heads : such is the justice of*  
*the overruling Providence under which we live !*

In these cases

We still have judgment here ; that we but teach  
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
To plague the inventor. This even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of the poisoned chalice  
To our own lips.

*Act i. Sc. 7.*

Hence it is that 'Time' is not untruly described as 'the Old Justice that examines all offenders,' *As you like it*, Act iv. Sc. 1. And again, we read in *King Lear* :—

Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides.

*Act i. Sc. 1.*

But even if Time should fail in this his office, upon earth, and during the present life, yet it will not be so hereafter, when Eternity succeeds.

If [transgressors] have defeated the law, and outrun native punishment, tho' they can oustrip men, they have no wings to fly from God.

*King Henry V. Act iv. Sc. 2.*

So argues the good King Henry V., and in like manner his son and successor asks :—

Can we outrun the Heavens ?

*King Henry VI. 2nd Part, Act v. Sc. 2.*

From sin—the disease—we naturally pass to the remedy, repentance : and as we have no other source from whence to learn with certainty the true nature of this remedy, except the Bible ; so it may be said, without exaggeration, that no professed

divine ever understood the doctrine of repentance better, or has expounded it more clearly than Shakspeare.

He takes care to let us know that our repentance, in order to be real, must proceed from sorrow felt not because we are to be punished for our sin, but because by it we have offended ONE whom it concerned us most of all to please; that, in order to be acceptable, it must be accompanied by confession and amendment—amendment which will lead us to make reparation to the utmost of our power, for what we have done amiss; and that, after all, its efficacy consists not in any power of its own, but solely in the covenanted mercy and promises of God, through Christ. Thus, in *Measure for Measure*, the duke, disguised as a friar, instructs Juliet in the prison, upon the first of these points, as follows :—

*Duke.* Repent you, fair one, of the sin you carry?

*Juliet.* I do, and bear the shame most patiently.

*Duke.* I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience, And try your penitence, if it be sound,

Or hollowly put on.

**He then proceeds to warn her :—**

Lest you do repent,  
As that the sin hath brought you to this shame,  
Which sorrow is always toward ourselves, not Heaven ;  
Showing we'd not spare\* Heaven, as we love it,  
But as we stand in fear—

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\* i. e. Spare to offend heaven.

*Juliet.* I do repent me, as it is an evil,  
And take the shame with joy.

Act ii. Sc. 3.

There is a difficult passage in *Cymbeline*, which must, I imagine, look for its true interpretation to the views which our poet has elsewhere expressed upon the subject of this great duty. It is towards the conclusion of the play, where Posthumus, in prison, thus soliloquizes :—

My conscience! thou art fettered  
More than my shanks and wrists: you good gods, give me  
The penitent instrument, to pick that bolt,  
Then, free for ever!

that is, he wishes for death, as the only way to everlasting freedom, provided he might die with a quiet conscience :—

Is't enough I am sorry?  
So children temporal fathers do appease;  
Gods are more full of mercy. Must I repent?

And, as involved in the notion of repentance, must I take my punishment as Juliet did hers, ‘with joy’; and, moreover, must I make satisfaction?—

I cannot do it better than in gyves,  
*Desired, more than constrained;* to satisfy,  
(If of my freedom 'tis the main part) take  
No stricter render of me than *my all*:—

that is, take my life—if such satisfaction be the *main part*, be the chief point, or principal condition of *freedom* from future punishment. So Steevens explains it; and, I think, rightly.

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The speech concludes with a recurrence to the view of a man being able to make *satisfaction* for himself, in a sense (as I believe) *purposely unchristian*, Posthumus being a heathen :—

And so, great Powers,  
If you will take this audit, take this life,  
And cancel these cold bonds.      Act v. Sc. 4.

This is the very notion, on the part of the heathen, which the Scriptures of the Old Testament so frequently protest against. See Job ix. 32. Micah vi. 7. At the same time, I have admitted that *Cymbeline* is the play to which the remark of Johnson, discussed above, in Sect. 1, may be applied perhaps with least injustice.

In the *Tempest*, where the characters also are *not Christian*, Ariel, after reminding Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio of the crime of which they had been guilty in ‘ supplanting Prospero ’—

For which foul deed,  
*The Powers delaying, not forgetting, have*  
Incens'd the seas, and shores, yea, all the creatures,  
Against your peace;

goes on to warn them, and Alonso more especially, of the necessity of repentance in general terms :—

Thee of thy son, Alonso,  
They have bereft; and do pronounce by me,  
Linger ing perdition (worse than any death  
Can be at once) shall step by step attend  
You and your ways; whose wrath to guard you from,  
Which here, in this most desolate isle, else falls



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Upon your head, is nothing but *beart's sorrow*,  
And *a clear life ensuing*. Act iii. Sc. 3.

Let us now see how our poet teaches that repentance cannot be effectual—in other words, that there can be no forgiveness—without confession, and without amendment, testified by ‘restitution and satisfaction (to man), according to the uttermost of our power, for all injuries and wrongs’ that we have done. The former, confession, is prescribed directly in *Hamlet*, Act. iii. Sc. 4 (quoted above, p. 117, note), and indirectly in *King Lear*, Act i. Sc. 1 :—

Who *cover faults*, at last shame them derides ;  
that is, as we read in the Book of Proverbs,  
xxviii. 13 :—

He that *coveretb bis sins* shall not prosper ; but he that *confessetb*, and *forsaketb them*, shall have mercy.

In regard to the latter, viz. amendment and satisfaction, nothing could be fuller, or better for the purpose, than the well-known speech of the king, in *Hamlet*, Act iii. Sc. 4 :—

What if this cursed hand  
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood ?  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To *wash it white as \* snow* ? Whereto serves mercy,  
But to confront the visage of offence ?  
And what's in *Prayer*, but this two-fold force,—  
To be forestalled, ere we come to fall,  
Or pardoned, being down ? Then I'll look up.  
My fault is past. But, O ! what form of prayer

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\* See Ps. li. 7 ; Isaiah i. 18.

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Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!—  
*Tbat cannot be; since I am still possessed*  
*Of those effects for which I did the murder,*  
*My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.*  
May one be pardoned, and retain the offence?  
In the corrupted currents of this world,  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;  
And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above:  
There is no shuffling; there the action lies  
In *bis\** true nature; and we ourselves compelled,  
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
To give in evidence. What then? what rests?  
Try what *Repentance* can. What can it not?  
Yet what can it, when one *can not repent*?—

that is, as Johnson has very properly explained it,  
What can repentance do for a man that cannot be  
*penitent*, for a man who has only *part* of penitence—  
distress of conscience—without the *other part*,  
resolution of amendment?

Shakspeare has been equally explicit in teaching  
the further lesson, that we must be 'ready to for-  
give others who have offended us, as we would  
have forgiveness of our offences at God's hand'—  
a lesson with which we are familiar from the lips  
of our Blessed Lord himself. I allude to the speech  
of Portia, in the *Merchant of Venice*, which has been  
already† noticed:—

We do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. Act iv. Sc. 1.

\* See above, p. 17. † See above, p. 110; and below, p. 217.



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The same is implied in the answer of Bolingbroke to the Duchess of York, interceding for the pardon of her son :—

*Bol.* I pardon him, as God shall pardon me.

*Duch.* O happy vantage of a kneeling knee !

*King Richard II.* Act v. Sc. 3.

Also, in the words of the Duke of Buckingham, when he was being led to execution, addressing Sir Thomas Lovell :—

I as free forgive you,  
As I would be forgiven.

*King Henry VIII.* Act ii. Sc. 1.

And hence it follows, or ought to follow, as we read in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* :—

Who by repentance is not satisfied  
*Is not of heaven, nor earth ; for these are pleased ;*  
*By penitence the Eternal's wrath's appeased.* Act v. Sc. 4.

Not, however, *for its own sake*. This is beautifully set forth, though not without a tincture of Romish doctrine, which was appropriate and necessary under the circumstances of the person and of the time, in a speech of the pious King Henry V. before the battle of Agincourt :—

O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts !  
Possess them not with fear ! Take from them now  
The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers  
Pluck their hearts from them ! Not to-day, O Lord,  
O not to day, think not upon the fault  
My father made in compassing the crown !  
I Richard's body have interred new ;

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And on it have bestow'd more contrite tears  
Than from it issued forced drops of blood.  
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,  
Who twice a day their wither'd hands hold up  
Toward heaven, to pardon blood ; and I have built  
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests  
Still sing for Richard's soul. More will I do :  
*The' all that I can do is nothing worth ;*  
Since that my penitence comes after all,  
*Imploring pardon.*      *King Henry V. Act iv. Sc. 1.*

These last lines have given rise to much discussion and difference of opinion among the critics. I am inclined to accept Dr. Johnson's explanation, as correctly representing what Skakspeare (who, in his affection for this good king, was willing to divest his Romanism of an unscriptural tendency, as far as possible) meant to convey. '*I do all this, says the King, though all that I can do is nothing worth,* is so far from an adequate expiation of the crime, *that Penitence comes after all imploring pardon,* both for the crime and the expiation.'

It is in the spirit of a true penitent that at the commencement of the same scene, the king had spoken of the purifying effect of hardships and distresses—borne after 'example' of holy men who have gone before us, or are still alive—and had desired opportunity for solitary meditation :—

'Tis good for men to *love their present pains,*  
*Upon example;* so the spirit is eas'd :  
And, when the mind is quickened, out of doubt,  
The organs, tho' defunct and dead before,

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Break up their drowsy grave, and newly move  
With casted slough, and fresh legerity.

I and my bosom must debate awhile,  
And then I would no other company.

It only remains to point out how fully our poet recognised that while repentance may come too late, or may be unreal, judicial blindness and infatuation are the sure portion of the impenitent. It is King Lear who exclaims :—

Woe, that too late repents.                           Act i. Sc. 4.

i. e. woe is to him that does so. And it is (as my reader perhaps will scarcely need to be reminded) Sir John Falstaff who makes merriment in teaching a lesson, which is, however, a very solemn one—and no less needful than solemn —viz. that we are too apt to make our repentance an easy thing, if not a matter of renewed self-indulgence. The passage to be quoted is in the dialogue with the Chief Justice, *King Henry IV. 2nd Part*, Act i. Sc. 2 :—

For the box o' the ear the prince gave you—he gave it like a rude prince, and you took it like a sensible lord. I have checked him for it; and the young lion repents: marry, not in sackcloth and ashes; but in new silk and old sack.

It is also a sensualist, but a sensualist of a very different class, who thus moralizes upon the consequences of a vicious and impenitent course. The words are in every way worthy of *Mark Antony* :—

When we in our viciousness grow hard,

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(O! misery on't!) the wise gods seal \* our eyes ;  
In our own filth drop our clear judgments ; make us  
*Adore our errors* ; laugh at us, while we strut  
*To our confusion.*      *Ant. and Cleop.* Act iii. Sc. 9.

Sentiments as awful as they are just ; and which will not appear either too irreverent for a Christian man to write, when we remember how often in the Psalms, and in the Book of Proverbs, God is said 'to laugh,' and 'to mock' at the calamities of those who have despised his laws ; or too profound for a Heathen man to utter, when we compare the deep sayings of Persius respecting the confirmed and reprobate votaries of vicious self-indulgence, in his 3rd Satire :—

Sed stupet hic vitio, et fibris increvit† opimum  
Pingue ; caret culpâ ; nescit quid perdat, et alto  
Demersus, summâ rursum non bullit in undâ.

Nothing can exceed the irony which represents a man as *faultless*, only because he has rendered himself *senseless*, and incapable of judging between right and wrong.

*Sect. 6. Of Faith and Thankfulness towards God.*

'Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man,' is a scriptural precept which Shakspeare has not been slow to echo, nor has he failed to do

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\* i. e. Close : a term of falconry, not to be confounded with *seal*.  
† Comp. *Habakkuk* ii. 6.



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full justice to the contrast with which the Scriptures so often accompany that precept, viz. the duty and the satisfaction of placing our trust in God. The devoted, but not over-honest nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* can tell her mistress—

There's no trust,  
No faith, no honesty in men ; all perjured,  
All forsworn, all nought, all dissemblers.\*

Act iii. Sc. 2.

And the Duke of Bedford can ask, in *King Henry VI. 1st Part* :—

What is the trust or strength of foolish men ?

Act iii. Sc. 1.

And yet we are senseless enough, as the Lord Hastings testifies, in *King Richard III.*, to make more account of man's favour, which is so worthless, than of the favour of God, which is above all price :—

O ! momentary grace of mortal men,  
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God !  
Who builds his hope in air, of your fair looks,  
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,  
Ready with every nod to tumble down  
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.

Act iii. Sc. 4.

As Cardinal Wolsey 'tumbled down' from the eminence to which he had been raised, and thereby was led, all too late, to exclaim :—

O ! Cromwell, Cromwell,  
Had I but served my God with half the zeal

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\* See Ps. xii. 1; xiv. 2; cvi. 10.



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I served my king, He would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

*King Henry VIII.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

In the scene which discovers the murder of King Duncan, in the castle of Macbeth—after Lady Macbeth has been carried out, feigning to be overcome by the bloody spectacle which she had herself contrived—Banquo exclaims, as if the sight of such a catastrophe brought home to his mind its true lesson, the utter insecurity, not only of all earthly greatness, but of all trust in man—

Fears and scruples shake us :

In THE GREAT HAND OF GOD I STAND ; and, thence,

Against the undivulged pretence I fight

Of treasonous malice. *Macbeth*, Act ii. Sc. 3.

And so the good King Henry V. recognised the blessedness of being able to place his confidence where alone it ought to be placed, when, with reference to the overwhelming numbers of the French, before the battle of Agincourt, he said to the Duke of Gloster :—

We are in God's hands, brother, not in theirs.

*King Henry V.* Act iii. Sc. 5.

And he felt it sinful to boast of anything he could do by his own power :—

Forgive me, God,  
That I do brag thus ! this your air of France  
Hath blown that vice in me ; I must repent.  
Go, therefore, tell thy master—

he is speaking to Montjoy, the French herald—

Here I am ;  
My ransom is this frail and worthless trunk ;



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My army but a weak and sickly guard :  
Yet, God\* BEFORE, tell him we will come on,  
Though France himself, and such another neighbour,  
Stand in our way. Act iii Sc. 6.

And he was justified by the result. Nor was the grateful piety of the father less conspicuous in the son, whose prayer for himself it is;—

O! Lord, that lends me life,  
Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness!

*King Henry VI. 2nd Pt. Act i. Sc. i.*

and whose exhortation to another—an exhortation which every man who has any just sense of the Divine goodness will not fail to apply to his own soul, and to practice in his own life;—

Poor soul! God's goodness hath been great to thee:  
Let never day nor night unhallowed pass,  
But still remember what THE LORD hath done.

*Ibid.* Act ii. Sc. i.

There are two occasions—one extraordinary, the other of ordinary occurrence—in regard to which our poet desired, it would seem, more especially to recommend this great duty of thankfulness towards God. The extraordinary occasion is when a victory has been gained. It is delightful to observe in what an amiable light the character of King Henry V. has been placed in this respect. Not even David himself has exhibited more fervent gratitude to the Divine Author of his victories than our pious sove-

\* i. e. God being our guide. The phrase is used again by the king in the same play, Act i. Sc. 2.

reign, after the defeat of the French in the battle of Agincourt. Thus, when Montjoy first announced to the king the glorious intelligence—‘The day is yours’—his first exclamation is a *Non nobis, Domine*, in these words :—

Praised be God, and not our strength for it!

*King Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 7.

And soon after, when the English herald came and delivered more fully the particulars of the victory, more fully rose also from the royal lips the ascription of praise and thanksgiving ;—

O! God, Thy arm was here,  
And *not to us, but to Thy arm alone*  
Ascribe we all. When, without stratagem,  
But in plain shock and even play of battle,  
Was ever known so great and little loss  
On one part and on the other? Take it, God,  
*For it is only Thine.*

*Exeter.*                            ‘Tis wonderful!  
Come, go we in procession to the village:  
And be it death proclaimed through our Host,  
To boast of this, or *take that praise from God*  
*Which is His only.*

*Ibid. Sc. 8.*

And how he himself behaved in strict accordance with his own command, is reported by the chorus at the opening of the next and concluding Act; the description refers to his return and entry into London :—

Where that his lords desire him to have borne  
His bruised helmet, and his bended sword,  
Before him through the city, he forbids it,



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Being free from vainness, and self-glorious pride,  
Giving full trophy, signal and ostent,  
*Quite from himself to God.*

In like manner, his son and successor, out of the fulness of the thankful heart for which he had prayed, thus signifies the acknowledgments which he desires to make upon hearing of the suppression of the insurrection headed by Jack Cade :—

Then, Heaven, set ope thy everlasting gates,  
To entertain my vows of thanks and praise !

*King Henry VI. 2nd Pt. Act iv. Sc. 9.*

The same pious and grateful character is ascribed, more than once, in the *First Part* of the same play, to the gallant Lord Talbot (see Act iii. Sc. 2 and Sc. 4); reminding us of the watchword of Judas Maccabeus, ‘Victory is of God,’ see 2 Macc. xiii. 15.

The occasion of ordinary occurrence to which I referred as one upon which our poet appears to have felt, in an especial manner, that thankfulness was due, is the receiving of our ‘daily bread.’ Although, as Cicero has said—I forget of whom—‘non tam hominis fuit ista virtus quam temporum,’ so the praise of this is due, not more to our poet himself, than to the age in which he lived. It is indeed greatly to the credit of our forefathers that they recognised the duty of saying grace at meals, certainly not less, and performed it, I imagine, far more efficiently than we in this generation are wont to do. This is evident partly from the forms which

were in use for such occasions, and which have come down to us in the Primers and other Devotional Manuals of the reigns of Edward VI. and Elizabeth, and partly from such as are still retained, mostly in Latin, in some of our college halls at the English universities and public schools.\* Still Shakspeare must also have the credit of giving to this duty its due prominence, and of indicating, as we shall presently see, again and again, the sense which he doubtless entertained of its propriety and importance. A century later it would seem that a change had come over the manners of our countrymen—if we may trust the testimony of Pope, speaking, too, of poets—for the worse:—

Then cheerful healths, . . . .  
And, what's more rare, a poet shall say grace.

And again, in another poem:—

Sons, sires, and grandsons, all will wear the bays,  
Our wives read Milton, and our daughters plays;  
To theatres and to rehearsals throng,  
And all our grace at table is a song.

At the same time I must not omit to add that we have the authority of Dr. Warton, in an observation upon the former of these passages, for the statement, that if saying grace was ‘rare’ with Pope, it was not so with Dean Swift. He ‘always did it,’ says the doctor, and (which one is glad to hear of

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\* See also Tusser's *Five hundred Points of good Husbandry*, p. 261:  
At dinner, at supper, at morning, at night,  
Give thanks unto God for His gifts so in sight.

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*anything that he did) 'with remarkable decency and devotion.'*\*

But to return to Shakspeare. Our two first illustrations are derived from the ancient days of Greece and Rome—from *Timon of Athens*, and from *Coriolanus*; and in these instances it may be thought that our poet has again been guilty of an impropriety—similar to that which we before noticed †—in attributing to men and women among the heathen, ‘sentiments and practices’ which are to be found only among Christians. But if so, this much at least may be said in his defence. If there be one redeeming feature in the spirit of the old Classical mythology, it is the disposition which it tended to form, of habitual thankfulness ‡ to a Superior Being. That it went so far as to teach men to *say grace at meals*, I am not prepared to maintain; but that it taught what was in effect the same—not to taste the cup till a libation had been poured to Jove, and not to put the sickle to the corn till sacred songs had been sung to Ceres—this, Homer, Il. vii. 480, and Virgil, Georg. i. 350, without going further, may suffice to prove.

One grace in *Timon of Athens* is a long one. Timon himself offers it, upon occasion of giving an entertainment in his own house. He introduces

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\* *Essay on Pope*, vol. ii. p. 306.

† See above, p. 113.

‡ See the beautiful passage in the fourth book of the *Excursion* to this effect.

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 175

it thus, speaking to the guests ; ‘ The gods require our thanks ; ’ and it begins in these words :

You great benefactors ! sprinkle our society with thankfulness.  
Act iii. Sc. 6.

This of course is in prose ; but on a previous occasion, in the same play, another grace occurs, said by Apemantus, the ‘ churlish philosopher,’ which is in verse, much after the style of some of the metrical graces in the old primers ; and the manner in which it is introduced, apparently as a *Benedictio post cibum*, or at least after the entertainment has commenced, may possibly be intended to reflect upon the omission of grace-saying at public banquets, or at the tables of the rich—a suspicion which the words, spoken by the same character immediately before, would seem to confirm :—

Feasts are too proud to give thanks to the gods.  
Act i. Sc. 2.

However this may be, and however we may question the propriety of putting such a sentiment as I am about to quote from *Coriolanus*, into the mouth of a Volscian soldier, there can be no doubt that the sentiment itself implies great familiarity on the part of our poet with the practice of saying grace both before and after meals. The scene is *A camp, at a small distance from Rome. Enter Aufidius, General of the Volscians, and his Lieutenant.*

*Aufid.* Do they still fly to the Roman ? \*

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\* i. e. to *Coriolanus*.

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*Lient.* I do not know what witchcraft's in him ; but  
Your soldiers use him as *the grace 'fore meat,*  
Their talk at table, and *their thanks at end;*  
And you are darkened in this action, sir,  
Even by your own.

Act iv. Sc. 7.

But to come to Christian times. Passing by the very proper resolution of Sir Hugh Evans, in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act i. Sc. 1 : ‘I will not be absence at the grace,’—where, by-the-bye, we should have thought Sir Hugh would have been the person to ‘ask the blessing’; we may turn to the *Merchant of Venice*, and I think we shall not be far wrong in supposing that our poet designed to satirize the Puritanism which had begun to prevail in his own age, when he put the following lines into the mouth of Gratiano in that play. Bassanio, whom he had proposed to accompany to Belmont, the house of Portia, consented, but at the same time required of him ‘to allay his skipping spirit with some cold drops of modesty :’—

*Grat.* Signior Bassanio, hear me :  
If I do not put on a sober habit,  
Talk with respect . . . . .  
Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely ;  
Nay more, *while grace is saying bood mine eyes*  
*Tbus with my hat, and sigb and say, Amen ;*  
Use all the observance of civility,  
Like one well-studied in a sad ostent,  
To please his grandam—never trust me more.

Act ii. Sc. 2.

It is somewhat remarkable that no one of Shak-

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speare's commentators, so far as I have seen, has a word to say in illustration of the dialogue, which I am about to quote, between Lucio and the two Gentlemen, in the second scene of *Measure for Measure* :—

*1st Gent.* There's not a soldier of us all that, in *the thanksgiving before meat*, doth relish the petition well that *prays for peace*.

*2nd Gent.* I never heard any soldier dislike it.

*Lucio.* I believe thee; for I think thou never wast where grace was said.

*2nd Gent.* No? A dozen times at least.

*1st Gent.* What? in metre?

*Lucio.* In any proportion, or in any language.\*

'*Proportion*,' Warburton says, here signifies *measure*; but I rather think it means *prose or verse, chant or hymn*, as '*in any language*' means especially, I imagine, *Latin or English*. However, it is of more interest to point out that the petition,

Give peace in our time, O Lord!

taken from the Versicles in the Prayer Book, before the Collect for the day, is still used, as it appears from the above passage to have been in Shakespeare's time, as part of the grace (probably from the connexion between *Peace* and *Plenty*) in some of our college halls; e. g. at Winchester, at election time, the concluding portion of the grace, *Post*

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\* Mr. Bowdler omits the two last speeches, and much more that follows—partly with and partly without sufficient reason.

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*cibum*, which is *chanted*, runs thus, being formed out of three of the said Versicles.

Fac Reginam salvam, Domine ; *Da pacem in diebus nostris* ; et exaudi nos in die quocunque invocamus te. Amen.

*Lucio* had meant to insinuate that the 2nd *Gentleman* was a graceless fellow. The same jest passes somewhat more broadly, as might be expected, between Falstaff and Prince Hal :—

*Fals.* I pray thee, sweet wag, when thou art king—as, God save thy grace—majesty, I should say ; for grace thou wilt have none—

*P. Hen.* What, none ?

*Fals.* No, by my troth ; not so much as will serve to be prologue to an egg and butter :—

*King Hen. IV. 1st Part, Act i. Sc. 2.*

where the speaker, with logic more characteristic than reverent, would imply that a short grace may suffice for a scanty meal.

There remains one more passage to be produced under this head ; and it is one from which we might perhaps infer that in the time of Shakspeare the master of the house sometimes devolved the duty of saying grace upon his wife. In *Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio says to Katharina, when the supper is brought in :—

Come, Kate, sit down ; I know you have a stomach.

Will you give thanks, sweet Kate, or else shall I ?

*Act iv. Sc. 1.*

**SECT. 7. Of the Duty and Efficacy of Prayer.**

There are few subjects of literary contemplation more interesting or more profitable than to observe the hold which a great practical subject like that of Prayer had upon a mind like that of Shakspeare. We know that some of our distinguished poets have unhappily allowed themselves, at one time or other, if not throughout their career, to imagine difficulties in the way of the performance of this duty; but we have no evidence in any of Shakespeare's plays, from first to last, that he ever entertained any but the truest and most just conceptions of it. First, we have already seen (p. 162) in *Hamlet* its twofold force, as obtaining either grace to prevent us from sinning, or pardon when we have sinned:—

What's in Prayer, but this two-fold force,—  
To be forestalled, ere we come to fall,  
Or pardoned, being down?                      Act iii. Sc. 3.

Next, in the epilogue to the *Tempest*, this latter efficacy is represented as an antidote to despair:—

My ending is despair,  
Unless I be relieved by Prayer;  
Which pierces so, that it assaults  
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.

It was probably not without some reference, in his own mind, to the practice of Daniel, vi. 10, and to the ancient *hours* of the church, that our poet puts into the mouth of Imogen, one of his sweetest

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and most attractive characters, those touching lines in which she represents herself as offering up prayers, ‘three times a day for her lover,\* and as having intended to enjoin the same practice upon him, in her behalf, before they parted, had not her father interposed to prevent the interview; otherwise, she says, I would—

Have charged him  
At the *sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,*  
To encounter me with orisons, for then  
*I am in heaven for him.*      *Cymbeline, Act i. Sc. 4.*

And the same devotional character is kept up, when, after she had become, in disguise, the page of Belarius, now supposed to be slain, she attaches herself to Lucius, the Roman general, in the same capacity :—

But first, an't please the gods,  
I'll hide my master from the flies, as deep  
As these poor pickaxes† can dig: and when  
With wild wood-leaves and weeds I have strew'd his grave,  
And on it said *a century of prayers,*  
Such as I can, *twice o'er,* I'll weep, and sigh;  
And, leaving so his service, follow you:  
So please you entertain me.      *Act iv. Sc. 2.*

Nor is there any reason to suppose that our poet designed to exhibit examples of the practice of this duty only, or specially, in the weaker sex. On the contrary, it is kings and nobles whom he has chosen

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\* See also *Tempest*, quoted below, p. 185.      † i. e. her fingers.

most of all to represent as men of prayer. This we expect in King Henry VI.,

Famed, as he was, for mildness, peace and prayer.

*King Henry VI.: 3rd Part, Act ii. Sc. 1.*

And so, when Gloster stabs him in the Tower, the last words he is made to utter are these, in which he prays at once for himself and for his murderer :—

O God! forgive my sins, and pardon thee.

*Ibid. Act v. Sc. 6.*

But the cruel and licentious Edward, who supplanted and succeeded him—even *he* is introduced with words of prayer upon his lips, though words which breathe little (and this so far is meet) of the fervour and simplicity in devotion of a true servant of God :—

O! Warwick, I do bend my knee with thine;  
And ere my knee rise from the earth's cold face,  
I throw my hands, mine eyes, my heart to THEE,  
Thou setter up and plucker down of kings!  
Beseeching Thee—if with Thy will it stands,  
That to my foes this body must be prey—  
Yet that Thy brazen gates of heaven may ope,  
And give sweet passage to my sinful soul!

*Ibid. Act ii. Sc. 3.*

It will be seen, however, that the occasion—it was the morning of the battle of Towton, near Ferrybridge, decisive in its issue against the opponents of Edward—was one in regard to which our poet rarely fails to impress the duty of supplication



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to the throne of grace. It is proper and incumbent upon us to have recourse to prayer before we undertake any important business ; and more especially before we engage in war. This, I doubt not, Shakspeare knew and felt ; and like a true Christian patriot, he desired that others should know and feel it. There is ample evidence to this effect, for example, in *King Henry V.* The good king, before he sets out upon his expedition, is made to say :—

We have now no thought in us but France,  
*Save those to God, that run before our business.*

Act i. Sc. 2.

His prayer to the ‘God of Battles,’ before the battle of Agincourt, has been already\* quoted ; and to that may be added here, that, while the Earl of Salisbury previously exclaims, as the English forces march into the field—

God’s arm strike with us!      Act iv. Sc. 3.

the king himself thus humbly resigns his cause to the disposal of the Most High :—

Now, soldiers, march away ;  
And how Thou pleasest, God, dispose the day !

A similar character is given, in *King Richard III.* to the Earl of Richmond, afterwards King Henry VII. Before the battle of Bosworth field, in which the wicked usurper was overthrown, not only does

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\* See above, p. 164.

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* (183)

Richmond exhort his followers to 'march in God's name,' Act v. Sc. 2, and bids them—

Remember this,—

God, and our good cause, fight upon our side ;  
The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,  
Like high-rear'd bulwarks stand before our faces ;—

*Ibid. Sc. 3.*

but he makes in private a set prayer to the same effect, when he retires to rest upon the night before the battle :—

O Thou ! whose captain I account myself,  
Look on my forces with a gracious eye ;  
Put in their hands Thy bruising irons of wrath,  
That they may crush down with a heavy fall  
The usurping helmets of our adversaries !  
Make us Thy ministers of chastisement,  
*That we may praise Thee in Thy victory !*  
To Thee I do commend my watchful soul,  
Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes ;  
Sleeping, and waking, O ! defend me still !

And when God had given him the victory, and the Lord Stanley came in, bearing the crown which he had taken from the head of Richard, now dead, and presented it to Richmond, his first exclamation is—

Great God of Heaven, say *Amen* to all ;   Act v. Sc. 4.  
and he concludes his speech, with which the play ends, in earnest prayer for lasting peace, summed up with a repetition of the same sentiment :—

O ! now, let Richmond and Elizabeth,

The true successors of each\* royal house,  
By heaven's fair ordinance conjoin together !  
And let their heirs, God, if Thy will be so,  
Enrich the time to come with smooth-fac'd peace,  
With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days !  
Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,  
That would reduce these bloody days again,  
And make poor England weep in streams of blood !  
Let them not live to taste this land's increase,  
That would with treason wound this fair land's peace !  
Now civil wounds are stopped, peace lives again ;  
That she may long live here, God say—AMEN.

But besides the self-interested obligation of praying for divine aid on all important occasions, our poet had a no less clear conception of the duty and value of intercession in behalf of others who need and desire our prayers. This appears, for instance, in the picture which he draws of the end of the



y first scene of what was, if not the first of all, certainly one of his first written plays—the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—he introduces the notion of friends praying for each other, in the case of the two young men, Proteus and Valentine, the latter whom was on the point of setting out upon his travels:—

*Proteus.* In thy danger,  
If ever danger do environ thee,  
Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers,  
For I will be thy beadsman, Valentine.

nson interprets *Beadsman*, 'a man employed  
praying, generally *in praying for another*.'  
And in the case of lovers performing for their  
loved the same duty, besides the instance from  
*Isbeline* quoted above, p. 180, we have in the  
*pest* a no less beautiful example, where Prospero  
to Miranda :—

Moreover, among the various occasions for the exercise of the duty of intercessory prayer, Shakespeare had learnt, and desired to teach, that it is especially—

A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion,  
To pray for them that have done scatb\* to us.

King Richard III. Act i. Sc. 3

**'for them which despitefully use us.'** Matt. v. 44.

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And, as though he would teach this duty most effectually, he allots to Macbeth the odious task of attempting to decry it, and that in colloquy with one whom he designed to employ for the murdering of Banquo :—

Do you find

Your patience so predominant in your nature,  
That you can let this go ? Are you *so gospelled*  
*To pray for this good man*, and for his issue,  
Whose heavy hand hath bowed you to the grave,  
And beggared yours for ever ? *Macbeth*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

On the other hand, it is assigned as a fitting office for one of the most charming and most perfect<sup>\*</sup> of our poet's characters, to exemplify this difficult duty in the most trying of all circumstances. When it is suggested to Desdemona, in order to account for Othello's vile and cruel language towards her, that some one must have slandered her to him, she meekly replies—

If there be any such, *Heaven pardon him !*

*Othello*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

There are two other points in regard to the duty of Prayer, which we should expect that Shakspeare would not overlook. One is, that our prayers should be *real*; not lip-service merely; and must proceed from a heart sincerely desirous to please

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\* In our admiration for Desdemona, however, we must not forget that her tragical end represents the unhappy issue of a marriage entered into by a daughter without her father's consent, and in deceitful opposition to his authority.



God. The other is, that, if we do not receive the things for which we pray, we ought not therefore to conclude that we have been unheard ; for it often happens that the denial of our requests may prove a greater benefit to us than the granting of them would have been. Accordingly, the former of these points is brought before us in *Hamlet*, where the wicked king, after kneeling and attempting to pray, rises with the confession :—

**My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;  
*Words without thoughts never to Heaven go.***

Act iii. Sc. 3.

And again, in *Measure for Measure*, the duplicity is exposed of professing to offer up prayer while the heart is bent upon yielding to temptation, in the person of the licentious Deputy :—

**He had before said, in the consciousness of suffering himself to be overcome—**

I am that way going to temptation,  
Where *prayers cross*;— *Ibid. Sc. 2.*

words which, doubtless, contain a reference to the petition in the Lord's Prayer against temptation, as Mr. Henley has observed; but of which it is not

\* Substituted by Warburton for *invention*.

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easy to give altogether a satisfactory interpretation, if we must be content to take them as they stand.

The latter point, which I just now mentioned, is one with which scholars will be familiar, as forming the subject of that most remarkable production of heathen antiquity—the 10th Satire of Juvenal—so vigorously imitated by Johnson; and, therefore, there is at least no impropriety in putting it, as Shakspeare has done, into a dialogue, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, between Sextus Pompeius and his friend Menecrates:—

*Pomp.* If the great gods be just, they shall assist  
The deeds of justest men.

*Mene.* Know, worthy Pompey,  
That *what they do delay, they not deny.*

*Pomp.* While we are suitors to their throne, decays  
The thing we sue for.

*Mene.* We, ignorant of ourselves,  
*Beg often our own barks, which the wise powers*  
*Deny us for our good; so find we profit*  
By losing of our prayers.

Act ii. Sc. i.

SECT. 8. *Of the Domestic Relations.*

We should be glad to be able to feel assured that the marriage of our poet, though formed at such an early age (before he was 19), and in one respect disproportionate (his wife being eight years older than himself), did not prove an unhappy one. Doubtless it assisted to give him, when he was still young, his deep insight into female character; and

the draught of his female personages, on the whole, would rather lead us to suppose, that as he had been prepossessed in favour of the gentler sex, so the experience which he afterwards enjoyed tended to confirm the first good impression. The views which he has expressed of the conjugal union are such as do him honour; and it is only fair, therefore, to conclude, that though he married early, he did not do so unadvisedly,\* or without a due regard to the sacredness of the tie, which it is certain he had learnt in his maturer years to regard in its proper light.† Thus, in *Twelfth Night*, the priest describes the marriage of Sebastian and Olivia as

A contract of eternal bond of love,  
Confirm'd by mutual joinder of your hands,

\* It must, however, be confessed, that in one of his last-written plays, *Twelfth Night*, he has left us a warning against the step which he himself had taken—yet a warning put in such a way that, with true delicacy of feeling, it reflects upon himself more than upon her who had been the object of his choice :—

Duke. Let still the woman take  
*An elder than herself*; so wears she to him,  
So sways she level in her husband's heart.  
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,  
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,  
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,  
Than women's are.  
Then let thy love be younger than thyself.

Or thy affection cannot hold the bent.      Act iv. Sc. 4.

† On Shakspeare in his own domestic relations, see Wise's *Shakspeare and his Birthplace*, p. 72, sq.; and the interesting essay by Dr. Ingram in the Dublin *Afternoon Lectures on English Literature*, 1863,

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Attested by the holy close of lips,  
Strengthen'd by interchangement of your rings;  
And all the ceremony of this compact  
Sealed in my function:—

Act v. Sc. 1.

Where Steevens has a note to the effect that ‘in our ancient marriage ceremony the man *received* as well as *gave* a ring.’ It is to be wished that he had produced some proof of this. In the meantime, I would observe that anciently the interchange of rings was a custom which belonged to the espousals, rather than to the solemnization of matrimony. And it would seem, from a subsequent speech of Sebastian, that the former *alone* were intended by our poet in the present case; an observation which may throw light, perhaps, upon the peculiar circumstances of Shakspeare’s own nuptials, as made known through the discovery, in 1836, of his marriage license.\* Be this as it may, Jaques, in *As you like it*, will furnish us with a protest, by anticipation, delivered according to his own quaint humour, against the unholy practice of a mere secular contract between man and wife, too often acquiesced in at the present day:—

Will you, being a man of your breeding, be married under a bush, like a beggar? Get you to Church and have a good priest that can tell you *what marriage is*: this fellow will but join you together as they join wainscot; then one of you will prove a shrunk panel, and, like green timber, warp, warp.

Act iii. Sc. 3.

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\* See Mr. Dyce’s *Life*, p. 30.

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 191

And, to pass to a graver strain, in *King Henry V.*, Isabel, Queen of France, is made to say, at the marriage of the king with her daughter Katharine :—

God, the best maker of all marriages,  
Combine your hearts in one.      Act v. Sc. 2.

Nor are the words that follow less worthy of the subject and the occasion, though she who uttered them proved untrue :—

I have forgot my Father;  
I know no touch of consanguinity,  
No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me  
As the sweet Troilus.

*Troilus and Cressida*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

In this last quotation the first half line will remind us of a passage in the Psalms, xlvi. 10. It is the same devoted feeling with which Desdemona, speaking of her father, says\* to Othello :—

If you have lost him,  
Why, I have lost him too.      *Othello*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

Meanwhile, in *King Henry VI. Part I.*, though we have the strongest denunciation of ‘wedlock forced,’† we are assured no less emphatically that

The contrary bringeth forth bliss,  
And is a pattern of celestial peace.      Act v. Sc. 5.

\* See also her speech to her father in Act i. Sc. 3; and compare Cordelia in *King Lear*, Act i. Sc. 1.

† Compare the speech of Fenton in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act v. Sc. 5.

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I notice too that the prohibition in Leviticus xviii. 6, 'None of you shall approach [in marriage] to any that is near of kin to him,' is brought out by Beatrice, in *Much ado about nothing*, where she playfully declares her resolution to remain a spinster:—

No, uncle; I'll none: Adam's sons are my brethren; and truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred. Act ii. Sc. i.

And that the said prohibition is not to be disregarded—in other words, that marriage is not to be contracted within the forbidden degrees—we are taught in sober earnest by Queen Elizabeth, widow of Edward IV., when Richard III. desires her to promote his union with her daughter, who was his own niece:—

(Richard. Tell her the king, that may command, entreat—  
Q. Eliz. That at her hands which the king's KING forbids:—

*King Richard III.* Act iv. Sc. 4

where the same chapter of Leviticus is plainly referred to.

Among the few instances of questionable morality in Shakspeare are those in which he appears to justify marriage undertaken by a daughter clandestinely and in opposition to the advice and judgment of parents. I allude especially to the case of Jessica in the *Merchant of Venice*, and of Ann Page in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. On the other hand, the unhappy consequences of such a step are vividly depicted in the fate of two of his

most attractive heroines, Desdemona and Juliet.  
See above, p. 186, note.

What I am next to quote would, probably, never have been written if a passage of S. Paul, Eph. v. 23, had not been running in our poet's mind. I allude to the dialogue between the Provost and Clown, in *Measure for Measure* :—

*Prov.* Come hither, sirrah, can you cut off a man's head?

*Clown.* If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, *be is his wife's head*, and I can never cut off a woman's head.

Act iv. Sc. 2.

But there is a speech in which, besides repeating this apostolic sentiment, it would seem that our poet set himself to draw out at length all that the Scripture teaches of the duty of wives towards their husbands, with such additional touches to the picture as his own imagination—or the contrast (let us hope) afforded by his wife's good qualities —would readily suggest. Katharina, having ceased to be a *shrew*, under the discipline of Petruchio, gives the following good advice to one who was married, but had not yet learned to be obedient to her husband :—

Fye, fye! unknot that threat'ning unkind brow,  
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,  
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor :  
It blots thy beauty, as frosts bite the meads ;  
Confounds thy fame, as whirlwinds shake fair buds ;  
And in no sense is meet or amiable.

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A woman moved is like a fountain\* troubled,  
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty ;  
And, while it is so, none so dry or thirsty  
Will deign to sip, or touch one drop of it.  
Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,  
*Tby bead*, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee ;  
And for thy maintenance, commits his body  
To painful labour, both by sea and land ;  
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,  
While thou liest warm at home, secure and safe ;  
And craves no other tribute at thy hands,  
But love, fair looks, and true obedience,—  
Too little payment for so great a debt.  
Such duty as the subject owes the prince,  
Even such a woman oweth to her husband ;  
And when she's peevish, froward, sullen, sour,  
And not obedient to his honest will,  
What is she but a foul contending rebel,  
And graceless traitor to her loving lord ?  
I am ashamed, that women are so simple  
To offer war, where they should kneel for peace ;  
Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,  
Where they are bound to serve, love, and obey.  
Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth,  
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,  
But that our soft† conditions, and our hearts,  
Should well agree with our external parts ?

*Taming of the Shrew*, Act v. Sc. 2.

Some of my fair readers will think, perhaps, that this lady's tongue has run on much too fast, and much too far—not unintentionally, I dare say, on the poet's part, in order to show how the characteristic weapon of the sex may be turned against

\* See Prov. xxv. 26.

† The gentle qualities of our minds.

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 195

themselves. It will be well, therefore, to pass on to a scene in which another Katharine will show, in much fewer words, and as exemplified in her own person, what is the perfect\* character of a good wife, and that, too, while her ‘loving lord’ must, unhappily, be pronounced ‘the graceless traitor’:

Have I lived thus long—a wife, a true one,  
A woman (I dare say, without vain glory)  
Never yet branded with suspicion?  
Have I with all my full affections,  
Still met the king? loved him next Heaven? obeyed him?  
Been, out of fondness, superstitious to him?  
Almost forgot my prayers to content him?  
And am I thus rewarded? 'tis not well, lords.  
Bring me a constant woman to her husband,  
One that ne'er dreamed a joy beyond his pleasure;  
And to that woman, when she has done most,  
Yet will I add an honour—a great patience.

*King Henry VIII.* Act iii. Sc. 1.

It is a curious instance of our author's tact that he employs women to teach wives their conjugal duty. We have seen this already in the *Taming of the Shrew*; there is another example in the *Comedy of Errors*, where Luciana takes to task her married sister Adriana, for want of obedience and submission to her husband, see Act ii. Sc. 1; and it is Portia, in the *Merchant of Venice*, who confesses—

A light wife doth make a heavy husband. Act v. Sc. 1.

Compare Eccles. xxv. 23: ‘A wicked woman maketh an heavy countenance and a wounded heart.’

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\* See also the character of Portia, wife of Brutus, in *Julius Cæsar*.

From the consideration of the duties which arise out of the marriage tie, we naturally proceed to the relationship of parents and children; and here again our poet may speak to us from his own experience, in both relations. He was himself the eldest son (though third in order of birth) of eight children—four of either sex—but three of the sisters died in infancy; and his own family consisted of two daughters and a son, the son and the younger of the daughters being twins.\* By the marriage of his elder daughter, Susanna, to Dr. John Hall, he became a grandfather in 1608, eight years before his death. His younger daughter, Judith, married Mr. Thomas Quiney only a few weeks before that event. Our poet's father had died in 1601, and his mother, to whom he probably owed much, in 1608. These bare facts furnish nearly all the materials which we now possess, or can hope to obtain, of our poet's family history. It will be interesting to supply the deficiency, in however slight a degree, so far as we may be able, from his writings. In these, accordingly, we may discover the tenderness of a parent's heart; where the clown, in *All's well that ends well*, quotes the proverb, 'Bairns are blessings,'† Act i. Sc. 3; and where Lady Macduff complains of her husband:—

He wants the natural touch.

*Macbeth*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

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\* See above, p. 4.

† See Psalm cxxvii. 6, cxxviii. 5, sq.

Or, again, where Lady Constance, in *King John*, says to Cardinal Pandulph, Act iii. Sc. 4 :—

*He talks to me that never had a son.*

In his writings, too, we seem to read that our author had learnt, and practised, and desired in his own turn to teach, the duty of children towards their parents. How pathetically, for instance, is this lesson read to Coriolanus by his mother Volumnia !—

*Say my request's unjust,  
And spurn me back ; but if it be not so,  
Thou art not honest ; and the gods will plague thee,  
That thou restraint from me the duty, which  
To a mother's part belongs.* *Coriolanus*, Act v. Sc. 3.

And how forcibly is Goneril admonished by the Duke of Albany, that no good can be expected either from or by an undutiful child :—

*O Goneril !*

*You are not worth the dust which the rude wind  
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition :  
That nature, which contemns its origin  
Cannot be bordered certain in itself :*

(i. e. cannot be restrained within any certain bounds, and will eventually shrink from no excess of sin).

*She that herself will silver\* or disbranch  
From her material sap, perforce must wither,  
And come to deadly use.* *King Lear*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

In these last words Warburton suggests that there is a reference to the use that witches and

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\* Tear off.

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enchanters are said to make of withered branches in their charms. But it is Lear himself who is employed, as we might expect, to place the deformity and misery of filial ingratitude in the strongest light :—

Ingratitude ! thou marble-hearted fiend,  
More hideous when thou shew'st thee in a child  
Than the sea-monster !  
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child. *King Lear*, Act i. Sc. 4.

There is good reason to believe that in using this strong language, Shakspeare wrote not only as he felt, but as he was justified in speaking by his own dutiful behaviour towards his parents.\* On the other hand, no less forcibly and pathetically does our poet teach us, we may suppose also from his own feelings, the affection which parents cherish, or ought to cherish, towards their offspring, in the complaint of Lady Macduff before referred to, and in the rebuke which Clifford administers to King Henry VI. :—

My gracious liege, this too much lenity  
And harmful pity must be laid aside.  
Whose hand is that the forest bear does lick ?  
Not his that spoils her young before her face.  
The smallest worm will turn, being trodden on,  
And doves will peck in safeguard of their brood.  
Unreasonable creatures feed their young,  
And tho' man's face be fearful † to their eyes,

\* See the Author's *Sermon preached at Stratford*, p. 22.

† i. e. formidable. See above, p. 32.

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Yet, in protection of their tender ones,  
Who hath not seen them (even with those wings  
Which sometimes they have used with fearful flight),  
Make war with him that climbed unto their nest,  
Offering their own lives in their young's defence?  
For shame, my liege, make them your precedent!

*K. Henry VI. 3rd Part, Act ii. Sc. 2.*

rebuke which, whether just or no, elicited from king in reply the noble sentiment about which e can be no question, viz. that the good deeds parents are the best inheritance which they can leath to their children :—

I'll leave my son my virtuous deeds behind.

hakspeare's only son, Hamnet, who died in his fth year,\* was still alive when this play was ten. Had he survived his father, his would ed have been a glorious inheritance. The two ghters of our poet, however, did both survive ; and to them—besides the immortal works ch he left behind—he bequeathed also, I doubt the effectual *blessing* of a good Christian. s I venture to say, because it may be presumed the pious practice of children receiving beneions from their parents—a practice common ur poet's time—was observed in his own family. it such must have been the case we may not easonably infer from his frequent mention of nd from the easy natural manner in which it is

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\* See below, Sect. 16.



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introduced. We find it in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in *Coriolanus*, in *Cymbeline*, in *Titus Andronicus*, in *King Lear*, in *Hamlet*, in *King Richard III.*, in the *Winter's Tale*. But before we turn to the passages, let me produce a few examples in illustration of the custom from other sources.

In the Life of Sir Thomas More, published in the late Dr. Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Biography*, we read :—

Towards his father he gave many proofs of his natural affection and lowly mind. Whosoever he passed through Westminster to his place in the Chancery, by the Court of King's Bench, if his father, who sat there as judge, had been set down ere he came, he would go to him, and reverently kneeling down in sight of all, ask him blessing. *This virtuous custom be always solemnly observed*; tho' then men after their marriages thought themselves not bound to these duties of younger folks.

Such was the humility and filial reverence of the then Lord High Chancellor of England ! Stapleton, in his *Tres Thomæ*, bears witness to the same fact, and in recording it speaks of the practice as *peculiar to the English people*. His words are worth quoting at the present day :—

Solent apud nos liberi *quotidie, mane ac vesperi*, benedictionem flexo poplite ab *utroque parente* petere. Qui mos si apud alias quasdam gentes obtineret, haberent *Parentes* filios magis morigeros, haberet *Respublica* subditos magis obsequentes, haberet *Ecclesia* fideles magis obedientes.\*

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\* *Eccl. Biog.* ii. 73. Compare the testimony of Meric Casaubon, quoted in *Christian Institutes*, iv. 565; also Walton's *Life of George Herbert*.

Nolas Ferrar was born when Shakspeare began  
it, viz. in 1592; and we are told of him, he was 27 years old, and his mother came to him at Little Gidding, that ‘though he was of age, and had been engaged in many public services of great importance, had been a disengaged member of Parliament, and had contrived with effect the prosecution of the Prime Minister of the day, at first approaching his mother, *upon the ground* to ask and receive her blessing;’ and he kept up the same practice in his family; as did also, we read,\* Mr. Philip Sanderson, who died in 1696: so that we have evidence of the existence of the custom during two centuries. Sanderson, in 1657, mentions it as one of the grievances which, in that disordered and disturbed time, were cried down as ‘rags of Popery.’

And there can be no doubt that during Cromwellian usurpation our old English manners suffered not a little, and ‘many practices which themselves part and instruments of piety, exploded and lost by being branded under such a name.’†

to return to Shakspeare. There could not be a more striking illustration of the custom of which I have been speaking, than that Caius says, on his return from the capture of Corioli,

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\* *Ibid.* iv. 173, 181. † *Works*, vol. ii. p. 35.  
See *Biog.* iv. 180. *Christian Institutes*, iv. 561.

and victory over the Volscians, should be made, as he is, to kneel and beg his mother's blessing :—

*All.* Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

*Cor.* No more of this, it does offend my heart :

Pray now, no more.

*Com.\** Look, sir, your mother!

*Cor.* O!

You have I know petitioned all the gods  
For my prosperity.

[*Kneels.*]

*Vol.†* Nay, my good soldier, up!

Act ii. Sc. 1.

In *Cymbeline*, we naturally expect the same from a son like Guiderius, see Act iv. Sc. 4 ; and from a daughter like Imogen, see Act v. Sc. 5. It is a daughter, too, who in *Titus Andronicus* says to her father, upon his return to Rome, after conquering the Goths :—

O bless me here with thy victorious hand. Act i. Sc. 2.

On the other hand, remembering the treatment which King Lear had received from his two unnatural daughters, Goneril and Regan, we are not surprised that the Fool should say to him, while they are out together in the pitiless storm upon the heath :—

Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughter's <sup>†</sup> blessing ; here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools. Act iii. Sc. 2.

\* Cominius, the general in command with Coriolanus, against the Volscians.

† Volumnia, mother to Coriolanus.

† So Mr. Malone prints it ; but surely it should be 'daughters.' Lear goes on to speak of 'two pernicious daughters.'

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While remembering also how he himself had acted towards his good daughter, Cordelia, we are not displeased that at the last, when moved to repentance, he should say to her :—

*When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,  
And ask of thee forgiveness ;—*      Act v. Sc. 3.

nor that she, on her part, should beseech and protest :—

*O ! look upon me, sir,  
And bold your bands in benediction o'er me.  
No, sir, you must not kneel.*      Act iv. Sc. 7.

In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, when Launce, the servant of Proteus, is to leave Verona in attendance upon his master, he ludicrously describes all the particulars of the mournful scene, and among the rest :—

*Now come I to my father ; Father, your blessing.*  
Act ii. Sc. 3.

In like manner, we have already seen,\* in *Hamlet*, Polonius laying his hand upon his son Laertes' head, and blessing him before he set out upon his travels ; and in the same play, Hamlet says to the unhappy queen his mother, whom he had urged to repentance and reformation :—

*Once more, Good night !  
And when you are desirous to be blessed,  
I'll blessing beg of you :—*      Act iii. Sc. 4.

that is, I'll beg your blessing, when you yourself

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\* Above, p. 134.

are desirous to amend, and so shall be in a condition to receive blessing from God.

In the *Winter's Tale*, when Perdita kneels to her mother Hermione, the latter's blessing is expressed in these terms :—

You gods, look down  
And from your sacred vials pour your graces  
Upon my daughter's head !                           Act v. Sc. 3.

Once more, in *King Richard III.*, the wicked Gloster, as he then was, has the hypocrisy to go through the same pious form towards his mother :—

*Glos.* Madam, my mother, I do cry you mercy !  
I did not see your grace—*Humbly on my knee*  
*I crave your blessing.*

*Ducb.* God bless thee ! and put meekness in thy breast,  
Love, charity, obedience, and true duty !

*Glos.* Amen ! And make me die a good old man.  
*Tbat is the butt-end of a mother's blessing,*                   [*Aside.*  
I marvel that her grace did leave it out.                   Act ii. Sc. 2.

It would be interesting to descend to the relations which exist in a family between the master and mistress and their domestics ; and to endeavour to trace the notions which our poet entertained of the reciprocal duties that flow from that relationship. But I must be content to observe that he has drawn no purer or better character than that of old Adam, the servant, in *As you like it* ; and that in *Cymbeline* he takes occasion, in a speech of Posthumus to his servant Pisanio, to lay down the just and important

principle, that no servant is bound to please his master by doing what is wrong :—

*Every good servant does not all commands :*

*No bond, but to do just ones.*

Act v. Sc. 1.

#### SECT. 9. *Of Charity and Mercifulness.*

If we are to lay a solid foundation of moral duty, we must first learn to entertain a just abhorrence of its opposite. ‘O ye that *love* the Lord, see that *ye hate* the thing that is evil.’ Ps. xcvi. 10. Thus of the Ten Commandments, not only the three first, but the five last also, are all couched in the negative form, as though the prohibition of vice was designed to form the foundation of virtue. And thus, too, we learn, even from a heathen poet—

*Virtus est vitium fugere, et sapientia prima  
Stultiâ caruisse;*

*the beginning of Virtue is to flee Vice, and the beginning of Wisdom to have escaped from Folly.*

In this and the four next sections I propose to test the teaching of Shakspeare by this rule ; and, following the order of the second table of the moral law, to show how, after the model of Scripture, he would teach us (1) from the prohibition of murder to build up the grace of charity ; (2) from the prohibition of adultery to build up the grace of chastity and sobriety ; (3) from the prohibition of stealing to build up the grace of honesty ; (4) from

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the prohibition of false witness to build up the grace of truth ; and (5) from the prohibition of covetousness to build up the grace of contentment.

The subject then of this section corresponds with the scope of the *sixth Commandment*, as developed by our Lord in His sermon on the mount.

In *K. Richard III.* Clarence thus speaks to one of the men who were sent by Gloster to murder him in the Tower :—

Erroneous vassal ! The great KING OF KINGS\*  
Hath in the *Table of His law* commanded  
That *thou shalt do no murder* ; wilt thou then  
Spurn at His edict, and fulfill a man's ?  
Take heed ; for He holds vengeance in His hand,  
To hurl upon their heads that break His law.

Act i. Sc. 4.

And so (according to the teaching of Scripture in Genesis ix. 6, Num. xxxv. 16) we read in *Macbeth*, Act iii. Sc. 4, ‘Blood will have blood.’ Compare the speech of Bolingbroke, in *King Richard II.* quoted above, p. 59, and of the senator in *Timon of Athens* :—

Friend, or brother,  
He forfeits his own blood, that spills another :—

Act iii. Sc. 5.

except, indeed, it be in self-defence—an exception upon which Alcibiades argues in that same scene :—

To kill, I grant, is sin's extremest gust ;  
But in defence, by mercy, 'tis most just :—

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\* See above, p. 101.

that is, as Dr. Johnson explains it, ‘I call mercy herself to witness that defensive violence is just.’

There is, however, a well-known passage in *Hamlet* in which our poet has not scrupled to exhibit his hero, not only as prepared to take blood for blood by *private assassination*, but as resolving to defer the act only out of ‘a refinement of revenge,’ with the view of securing, at the same time, as far as possible, the everlasting perdition of the murderer. And Johnson, accordingly, has condemned the speech—more especially coming, as it does, from ‘a virtuous character’—as one ‘too horrible to be read or to be uttered.’ This is a grave charge to bring against our author; and though the commentators in general appear to have acquiesced in it as just, I would venture to offer a few remarks in arrest of so severe a judgment. For this purpose it will be necessary to produce at least a portion of the speech alluded to. When the wicked king, in attempting to repent,\* retires and kneels, Hamlet, entering unobserved, says to himself—with reference to the act of murder which he was contemplating—

Now might I do it, pat, now he is praying;  
*And now I'll do't* :—and so he goes to heaven :—  
*And so am I revenged? That would* † *be scanned:*  
A villain kills my father: and, for that,

\* See above, pp. 162, sq., 187.

† That *should* be, *requires to be well considered.*

I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.

Why this is hire and salary, not revenge.  
He took my father grossly, *full of bread*,  
With all his crimes broad blown.

I may observe, by the way, that the expression 'full of bread' affords a remarkable instance of Shakspeare's intimate acquaintance with Holy Scripture. I had noticed the parallel to Ezekiel, xvi. 49, and I find that Mr. Malone has done the same. Hamlet continues:—

And am I then revenged  
To take him in the purging of his soul,  
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?  
No.  
Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent\*—

And he concludes by saying *aside* to the king—

himself, in a subsequent scene (Act iv. Sc. 7), when stimulating Laertes to kill Hamlet, says : ‘ Revenge should have no bounds.’ These remarks are confirmed by many unhappy incidents in our Scotch history. The following is told by Sir Walter Scott, in his Review\* of the Culloden Papers :—

So deep was this thirst of vengeance impressed on the minds of the Highlanders, that when a clergyman informed a dying chief of the unlawfulness of the sentiment, urged the necessity of his forgiving an inveterate enemy, and quoted the Scriptural expression, ‘ Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,’ the acquiescing penitent said, with a deep sigh—‘ To be sure it is too sweet a morsel for a mortal.’ Then added, ‘ Well, I forgive him, but the *deil take you*, Donald (turning to his son), if *you* forgive him !

Other stories are told by Sir Walter to the same effect in the same place, and ‘ we could add an hundred,’ he writes, ‘ of that insatiable thirst for revenge which attended *northern* feuds.’ Under ‘ northern,’ we may well include ‘ Danish ;’ especially when we consider the close affinity that existed between this country and Denmark in early times. In like manner, Mr. P. F. Tytler, in his *History of Scotland*,† tells us of ‘ the sacred duty of feudal vengeance ;’ and again, of the ‘ deep principle of feudal vengeance which demanded blood for blood ;’ a principle which he describes, in another place, as ‘ so universally felt that it may be regarded almost as the *pulse* of feudal life.’ That our poet

\* See *Quarterly Review*, vol. xiv. p. 288.

† See vol. ix. pp. 15, 65, 309.

had fully realized the existence and the energetic character of this principle may be inferred from scenes and sentiments which he has introduced elsewhere; as in *Romeo and Juliet*, where Tybalt, as a Capulet, says of a Montague—

Now by the stock and honour of my kin,  
To strike him dead, I hold it not a sin. Act i. Sc. 5.

But there, also, the entire plot and catastrophe of the play turns upon the fatal results which may be expected to overtake those who act upon such a sentiment; while its corrective is early (Act iii. Sc. 1) administered by Escalus himself in those weighty words:—

Mercy but murders, pardoning those who kill.

And in *Hamlet*, even the wicked king is made to substantiate the same truth:—

No place indeed should murder sanctuarize;  
Act iv. Sc. 7.

as to have *no foundation* in actual derangement; and what more proper or more natural than that the cause which gave occasion for his derangement should lead him to harbour an idea so monstrous, and to express himself in terms so shocking, as to be defensible only upon that ground? I agree with Goethe and others who conceive that Shakspeare meant, in the case of Hamlet, to represent the effects of a great action laid upon one who was inadequate to the performance of it. And part of this inadequacy, I imagine, is made to lie in his looking for the redress which he had to seek only in **personal** revenge of the meanest kind—secret **assassination**; while, in justice to the really good and amiable features of his character, a veil is in **some** sort thrown over this *meanness* by accompanying it with sentiments which would indeed be ‘*too horrible*’ for any man, much more a man of ‘*virtuous character*,’ *not disordered in his mind*, to entertain or express.

At the same time it is to be noted that Shakspeare had prepared us from the first not to expect in Hamlet, however virtuous on the whole, *the perfection of Christian principle* in bearing up against the grievous wrongs done to both his parents, and through them to himself. In the second scene of the play, speaking to his friend Horatio, of his mother’s marriage with the murderer of his father—before the ghost had assured



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him of the fact and circumstances of the murder—he has recourse to a sentiment which contains the germ of all that shocks us most in the speech so gravely censured by Dr. Johnson, and gives the first indication of *excited* feeling, in the direction not of discontent merely, but of maliciousness, of revenge:—

Would I had met *my dearest\* foe in heaven,*  
Or ever† I had seen that day, Horatio! Act i. Sc. 2.

How different the language put by our poet into the mouth of Wolsey, as a Christian bishop, now penitent and at the close of life :—

*Cberish those hearts that hate thee!*

*K. Henry VIII.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

And again this truly Christian character is given to the first reformed Anglican archbishop, Cranmer, in the same play, the king himself bearing witness of him in these words :—

The common voice, I see, is verified  
Of thee, which says thus: *Do my Lord of Canterbury*  
*A bswred turn and be is your friend for ever.*

Act v. Sc. 2

Our poet, we may observe, is not content with teaching us the great religious lessons of shewing kindness and doing good. These, indeed, he does teach most forcibly and repeatedly. First, in the very language of S. Paul, Rom. xiii. 10, we read, in *Love's Labour's lost*—

*Charity fulfills the law.*

Act iv. Sc. 3.

\* i. e. greatest, worst.

<sup>†</sup> See above, p. 38.

Next, 'to strain a little' ourselves, in order to help in building up the fortunes of others, we learn, in *Timon of Athens*, is a duty imposed not only by religion, but by the first principles of humanity :—

**And, again, in the same play:—**

We are born to do benefits. Act i. Sc. 2.

Moreover, the following beautiful description of the compassionate and charitable man may well incline us to do likewise. King Henry IV. is speaking of his son the Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V. :—

He is gracious if he be observed;  
He hath a tear for pity and a hand  
Open as day for melting charity.

King Henry IV. 2nd Part, Act iv. Sc. 4.

Our poet, I say, has not only taught us these lessons, but the still higher doctrine which he could have learnt, and which he *professed to have learnt*, only from the Word of God, viz. not to render evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good. Thus we have seen in *King Richard III.*, quoted above, p. 66, 'God bids us do good for evil ;' And, again, it is proclaimed in *All's well*, &c.,

We must do good against evil.      Act ii. Sc. 5.

And, again, we read in *As you like it*, Act iv. Sc. 3,  
Kindness [is] nobler ever than revenge.

And here I may remark that though the precept to *love our enemies* aims at a height to which the

most perfect teaching of morality among the heathen made no pretension, yet the doctrine of forgiveness\* was not altogether unknown to them, as we may gather from Cicero :—

Sunt quædam officia etiam adversus eos servanda a quibus injuriam acceperis. Est enim ulciscendi et puniendi modus. Atque haud scio an satis sit *eum qui laccassierit, injuria sue pænitere.*  
*De Officiis*, lib. 1, cap. xi.

Our poet, therefore, was perhaps at liberty to put such words as these into the mouth of Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus :—

Why dost not speak?  
Think'st thou it *honorable for a noble man*  
*Still to remember wrongs?*      *Coriol. Act v. Sc. 3.*

And also to put what follows into the mouth of Prospero, in the *Tempest*, Act v. Sc. 1 :—

The rarer action is  
In virtue [i. e. forgiveness] than in vengeance.

And, once more, to make the senator say, in *Timon of Athens*, Act iii. Sc. 5,

To revenge is no valor, but to bear.

On a par with *Revenge* for the *evil* we have received is *Ingratitude* for the *good*. ‘Religion groans at’ both ; though it is with reference to the latter that our poet has used this expressive phrase, in the last-named play :—

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\* On the duty of forgiveness compare above, p. 163 ; and on Shakspeare’s own practice in this respect, see Mr. Wise, p. 145.

*1st Stranger.* O ! see the monstrousness of man,  
When he looks out in an ungrateful\* shape.

*2nd Stranger.* RELIGION GROANS AT IT. Act iii. Sc. 2.

On the other hand, Religion SMILES at every attempt to overcome or to remove not only the more grievous instances of uncharitableness such as those, but whatever is at variance with brotherly kindness and goodwill. She has taught our poet to write :—

Blessed are the peacemakers on earth.

*K. Henry VI. 2nd Part,* Act ii. Sc. 1.

God's benison go with you, and with those  
That would make good of bad, and friends of foes.

*Macbeth,* Act ii. Sc. 3.

And, further, she has taught him, as we saw above in Section 7, that one great instrument of making peace, is to *pray for those who despitefully use us.*

Moreover, the Bible teaches that the foundation of love or charity to others is the sense of our own liability to want ; and the true motive for exercising charity the remembrance that we ourselves do constantly need effectual relief and loving comfort, and *do constantly receive them* from God :—

Thou shalt not oppress a stranger, *for ye know the heart of a stranger,* seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

*Exodus xxiii. 9.*

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\* Compare the strong condemnation of Ingratitude in *Twelfth Night* :—

I hate ingratitude more in a man  
Than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness,  
Or any taint of vice, whose strong corruption  
Inhabits our frail blood.

Act iii. Sc. 4.



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The Lord your God loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger : *for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt*, from which the Lord delivered you.

Deut. x. 17-19.

King Lear confesses that in the day of prosperity he had given too little heed to these considerations:

O ! I have ta'en  
Too little care of this ! Take physick, Pomp ;  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches\* feel ;  
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,  
And show the Heavens more just.     Act iii. Sc. 4.

But it is Gloster who is made use of, in the same play, to teach this same lesson still more effectually. Turned out of doors, with his eyes put out, he meets on the heath, without knowing him, his son Edgar, as Mad Tom. Learning from the old man who led him that Mad Tom was a beggar, he says to him :—

Here, take this purse, thou whom the heaven's plagues  
Have humbled to all strokes : that I am wretched,  
Makes thee the happier—

i. e. because my wretchedness now teaches me to compassionate those who are in distress :—

Heavens, deal so still !  
Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man  
That slaves† your ordinance, that will not see  
*Because he doth not feel*, feel your power quickly :

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\* The general duty of sympathy is expressed by the very word of Scripture, Rom. xii. 15, ‘to weep with them that weep,’ in *Titus Andronicus*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

† Makes a slave of, instead of obeying, the divine ordinance — charity to the poor.

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So distribution should undo excess,  
And each man have enough.

Act iv. Sc. 1.

These concluding lines may remind us of S. Paul's argument in favour of alms-giving, 'that there may be an equality' between rich and poor, in 2 Cor. ii. 13-15.

Once more, in the same play, Edgar, who had been made to drink deeply of the 'physic' of adversity, tells the happy effect which it had produced upon him. When asked, 'Now, good sir, what are you?' he answers:—

A most poor man, made tame by fortune's blows:  
Who, by the art of known and feeling\* sorrows,  
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand,  
I'll lead you to some biding.†

Act iv. Sc. 6.

I have already † had occasion to quote the well-known speech of Portia, in the *Merchant of Venice*, which bears upon this point:—

We do pray for mercy:  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.

Act iv. Sc. 1.

And if we fail to act thus, first the Duke, and then Portia again, in the same scene warn us what we may expect:—

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?  
As thou urgest justice, be assur'd  
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st.

Compare S. James ii. 13.

---

Either 'feeling' is used for 'felt,' as Malone is inclined to think, or 'known and feeling' is to be understood of 'past and present sorrows,' as Warburton interprets.

Place to abide in.

† See p. 110.



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We know that, according to the teaching of Scripture, and especially of S. Paul, charity or love is the sum of all virtue. There is something singularly striking in the way in which our poet carries on the idea, and makes *kindness* the sum not only of all virtue, but of all beauty :—

In nature there's *no blemish*, but the mind ;  
None can be called *deformed*, but the *unkind* :  
**VIRTUE IS BEAUTY.**     *Twelfth Night*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

Shakspeare was doubtless no stoic ; but by some means or other he has contrived to appropriate and improve upon the best ideas of the stoical philosophy.

Flowing from a kindly and considerate disposition, the duty of hospitality is one which the Bible, we know, frequently enjoins and commends. See 1 Peter iv. 9 ; Hebrews xiii. 2 ; Romans xii. 13. But there is a passage more solemn and more impressive than any of these, spoken by our Lord Himself with reference to the great day of account. ‘I was a stranger, and ye took me in ;’ and ‘I was a stranger, and ye took me *not* in,’ Matt. xxv. 35, 43 ; which I cannot help thinking was present to our poet’s mind when he made Corin say, in *As you like it* :—

My master is of churlish disposition,  
And little reeks to find the way to heaven,  
By doing deeds of hospitality.     Act ii. Sc. 4.

Copious, however, and emphatic as the Bible is

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in giving us lessons upon all the parts and exercises of duty which relate to charity and brotherly love, it does not omit to prescribe, at the same time, all needful caution in regard to the mistakes that may be made and the danger incurred by the indulgence of kind feelings, or a social disposition, without discretion and respect of persons. We are to be careful in the choice of those with whom we associate ; careful in making and trusting friends ; careful, above all, not to ‘walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful.’ I feel that it is carrying out the subject of this section somewhat beyond its proper limit to extend it to points such as these ; I shall not, therefore, attempt to illustrate them in detail ; only, as a warning upon the choice of friends, I venture to quote the dying speech of the Duke of Buckingham, in *King Henry VIII.* :—

You that hear me,

This from a dying man receive as certain :

Where you are *liberal* of your loves and counsels,  
Be sure you be not loose, for those you make friends,  
And give your hearts to, when they once perceive  
The least rub in your fortunes, *fall away*  
*Like water\** from ye, never found again,  
But where they mean to sink ye.      Act ii. Sc. 1.

Falstaff gives us another and still weightier reason for the same precept :—

It is certain that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is

\* See Psalm lviii. 6, Prayer-Book version ; and Job vi. 15.

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caught, as men take diseases, one of another: therefore let men take heed of their company.

*King Henry IV. 2nd Part, Act v. Sc. 1.*

Or, as Cassius expresses it, in *Julius Cæsar* :—

"Tis meet  
That noble minds keep ever with their likes :  
For who so firm that cannot be seduced ?

Act i. Sc. 2.

Compare with this sentiment the verse of Menander quoted by S. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 33.

And that *a multitude is not to be followed in doing evil*, where could we find a more just, though laughable, illustration than in the words of Fluellen in the English camp before the battle of Agincourt?—

If the enemy is an ass and a fool and a prating coxcomb, is it meet, think you, that *we should also, look you, be an ass and a fool and a prating coxcomb* :—in your own conscience now?

*K. Henry V. Act iv. Sc. 1.*

But to return. Shakspeare extends the duty of mercifulness, as the Scriptures also do, to the brute creation. It may suffice to refer to his touching description of the wounded stag in *As you like it*, Act ii. Sc. 1; and as we read in Isaiah i. 3, that 'the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib,' so Sicinius says, in *Coriolanus*, Act ii. Sc. 1 :—

Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

SECT. 10. *Of Diligence, Sobriety, and Chastity.*

I have already been led to speak, in the eighth section of this chapter, on the sacred character and manifold obligations of the Conjugal Relationship. It is a relationship whereby the wife becomes, in the highest and noblest sense, the property of the husband, and the husband the property of the wife. A British Churchman may be allowed to please himself in fancying Shakspeare as an occasional hearer of Bp. Andrewes\*—the greatest poet listening to the greatest preacher of the age—and had he been present when that admirable divine delivered his ‘*Exposition of the Seventh Commandment*,’ he could not have laid down its first principles more accurately than he has done in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Hector thus speaks respecting the duty of restoring Helen to her husband Menelaus :—

Nature craves  
All dues be rendered to their owners ; now,  
*What nearer debt† in all humanity*  
*Than wife is to the husband ?* If this law  
Of nature be corrupted thro’ affection,  
There is a law in each well-order’d nation,

\* Born in 1555, died 1626 ; one of the translators of the Bible.

† Mr. Malone interprets the word ‘propriety’ as used by Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Act v. Sc. 2, in this sense, viz. to mean the right of *property* which a married couple have in each other, and which Milton speaks of as the ‘sole *propriety* in Paradise ;’ but I rather think it means in that place, ‘proper state.’



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To curb those raging appetites that are  
Most disobedient and refractory.  
If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king—  
As it is known she is—these *moral laws*  
*Of nature and of nations* speak aloud  
To have her back returned :—Thus to persist  
In doing wrong, extenuates not wrong,  
But makes it much more heavy.

Act ii. Sc. 2.

And in *Measure for Measure* our poet follows the severity of the Mosaic Law, that those who commit the sins more immediately forbidden by this commandment are worthy of death,\* no less than they who commit murder :—

It were as good  
To pardon him, that hath from nature stolen  
A man already made, as to remit †  
*Their saucy*‡ *sweetness*, that do coin Heaven's image  
In stamps that are forbid ;—

Act ii. Sc. 4.

an aphorism not the less profound because enunciated by a hypocrite, of which the author gives us intimation, with admirable skill, by the phrase chosen to describe the sin which is at once palliated and proscribed.

In like manner, no exception can be taken against the truth of what follows—in regard either to the imprudence of hasty marriage or the criminality of divorce—however we may abhor the speaker, the wicked Gloster :—

*Hasty marriage seldom proveth well.*

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\* But comp. S. John viii. 11. See also *King Lear*, Act iv. Sc. 6.  
† Pardon.      ‡ Inordinate indulgence of sensual appetite.

Yet God forbid that I should wish them severed,  
Whom God hath joined together.

*K. Henry VI. 3rd Part, Act iv. Sc. 1.*

And so marriage is called in *Love's Labour's lost*,

A world-without-end bargain.                      *Act v. Sc. 2.*

There is a sentiment, too often realised in the  
experience of inordinate affection and unhallowed  
encourse between the sexes, which our poet might  
have adopted from the miserable history of Amnon  
and Tamar, recorded in 2 Samuel xiii. 2-15 :—

Sweet love, I see, changing his property,  
Turns to the sourest and most deadly hate.

*K. Richard II. Act iii. Sc. 2.*

And where shall we find the unhappy passion  
which sometimes seizes upon true and pure affection,  
of which Shakspeare has delineated with over-  
whelming power in *Othello*,\* and again in *Winter's  
Tale* and *Comedy of Errors*, more justly characterised  
than in the *Song of Solomon*?—

Jealousy is cruel as the grave ; the coals thereof are coals of fire,  
which hath a most vehement flame.                      *viii. 6.*

\* In mitigation of the horror which the conduct of Othello  
presents, it would be well if it could be proved that he was not a  
Christian. Schlegel regards him so, and points this out as an  
instance in which Shakspeare has improved upon the novel, the  
author of which he says 'is a baptised Saracen.' But to say  
nothing of the language which Othello himself uses in Act ii.  
3, quoted below, in p. 225 ; or of the reference which Iago (who  
certainly must be considered of the same religion as his general) makes  
to 'the proofs of Holy Writ' in Act iii. Sc. 3 ; it is plain that Schlegel  
must have overlooked the passage in Iago's soliloquy (Act ii. Sc. 3),

That the plays of Shakspeare are not free from passages which may minister food to an impure imagination, cannot be denied;\* but that their general tendency is of an opposite and wholly virtuous character, is no less certain.† Nor has he omitted, on fit occasions, to set forth the best of lessons for the control of passion, and the avoiding of excess. See, for instance, in the *Tempest*, Act iv. Sc. 1, the earnest caution given to lovers before marriage; in *All's well, &c.*, Act v. Sc. 5, the advice of Mariana to the widow's daughter; the passage in the *Comedy of Errors*, quoted above, p. 125; and the song of the Fairies, in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act v. Sc. 5. I may also refer to the severe rebuke which the Duke, disguised as a friar, administers to the Clown upon his profligate course of life, in *Measure for Measure*, Act iii. Sc. 2; and to *Othello*, where Cassio, after he had been betrayed into intoxication, delivers the following lecture against intemperance:—

Oh! that men should put an enemy to their mouths to steal

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where he speaks of Othello as ready even 'to renounce *his baptism*' for the love of Desdemona. See below, p. 275.

\* That he himself was penitently conscious of this may perhaps be inferred from expressions in one or more of his *Sonnets*. But compare my remarks below in the *Conclusion*.

† In confirmation of this judgment see the remarks of Mr. Keble in *Prælections Academica*, quoted by the Author in his *Sermon preached at Stratford*, pp. 9-12; also the Archbishop of Dublin's *Sermon*, p. 10, upon the general excellency of Shakspeare's female characters.



## *Sentiments derived from the Bible. 225*

away their brains! that we should with joy, revel, pleasure and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!

Iago. Why, but you are now well enough. How came you thus recovered?

Cassio. It hath pleased the devil Drunkenness to give place to *the devil's* wrath: one imperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself. . . . To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently † a beast! O strange! Every *imordinate cup is unblessed*, and the ingredient is a devil.

Act ii. Sc. 3.

The drinking bout had ended in a quarrel, and in the midst of the disturbance, Othello, coming in, exclaims:—

Why, how now, ho! from whence ariseth this?  
Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that  
Which Heaven hath forbid the Ottomites? †  
For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.

The last line is one of those which make it difficult to believe that Shakspeare had altogether forgotten his schoolboy classics. Surely when he wrote it he was thinking of Horace:—

Natis in usum lætitiae scyphis  
Pugnare Thracum est; tollite barbarum  
Morem, verecundumque Bacchum  
Sanguineis prohibite rixis.

In like manner we are warned against idleness, as the certain mother of all evil, and especially of

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\* See Ephes. iv. 27.

† Compare what the clown, in *Twelfth Night*, says of a drunken man: that he is 'like a drowned man, a fool, and a madman.'

Act i. Sc. 5.

† Mahometans.

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such sins as are pointed at under this head, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where Antony first reflects :—

O then, we bring forth weeds  
When our quick minds\* lie still :—

and next resolves,

I must from this enchanting queen break off :  
Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,  
*My idleness doth hatch.*      Act i. Sc. 2.

Where again it is not impossible that Shakspeare had in mind another Roman poet of high authority in such matters :—

*Quæritur Ægisthus quare sit factus Adulter?*  
In promptu causa est ;—desidiosus erat.

But the most impressive lesson in this respect is the picture which our poet draws of the deathbed of one whom he has made the type of a merry, but sensual and ungodly life ; and being put into the mouth of a worthless woman (for it could scarcely have been represented otherwise) the description of the scene is made more touching, more melancholy. I allude to Act ii. Sc. 3, in *King Henry V.* The reader of Burnet, of Evelyn's Memoirs, and of the Life of Bp. Ken, will be at no loss to compare a parallel scene of real life, only exhibited on the most elevated stage and in the highest rank; I allude to the deathbed scene of the 'Merry Monarch,'

\* I prefer this conjecture of Warburton to the reading, 'winds,' notwithstanding Johnson's explanation.

King Charles II. Truly ‘the end of that mirth is heaviness !’ Prov. xiv. 13.

I cannot refrain from adding that as idleness is the root of vice, so diligence, together with the desire of self-improvement\* is, under the guidance of Divine grace, the best road to virtue. And this too our poet would teach us, if I do not misinterpret him, in these comprehensive and emphatic words :—

Ignorance is the curse of God,  
*Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.*  
K. Henry VI. 2nd Part, Act iv. Sc. 7.

Or to take only the lower and merely practical view which a heathen could exhibit :—

No

Posces ante diem librum cum lumine, si non  
Intendes animum studiis et rebus honestis,  
*Invidiâ vel Amore vigil torquebere :*—

in other words, with such things as, he leaves us to conclude, are not ‘honest,’ not ‘virtuous,’ not ‘of good report.’ By ‘invidia’ we may understand all those evil affections which belong to the irascible, as by ‘amor’ those which belong to the concupiscent part of our nature.

And this admonition, important at all times, is especially needful for the young. Hence, it is with good reason that Laertes warns his sister Ophelia :—

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\* See the speech of Hamlet quoted above, p. 129.



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In the morn and liquid dew of youth  
Contagious blastments are most imminent :  
Be wary then. *Hamlet, Act i. Sc. 2.*

Nor can we doubt of the good fruit which will follow in after life from such self-control and self-cultivation ; for, as Iago testifies—

"Tis in ourselves that we are thus, or thus.\* Our bodies are our gardens ; to *the*† which our wills are gardeners : so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce ; set hyssop and weed up thyme ; supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many ; either to have it steril with idleness or manured with industry—why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. *Otello, Act i. Sc. 3.*

Lastly, in speaking of the cultivation of the body, let us not forget—especially in days when no bounds are set to the adorning of the person and to extravagance in dress :—

"Tis *the mind* that makes the body rich ;  
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,  
So honor peereth in the meanest habit.

*Taming of the Shrew, Act iv. Sc. 3.*

### SECT. II. *Of Justice and Honesty.*

We are told in *Measure for Measure* of a certain 'sanctimonious pirate that went to sea with the *Ten Commandments*, but scraped one—the eighth—out of the Table,' *Act i. Sc. 2.* *Thou shalt not steal* 'was a

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\* See above, p. 143.

† See above, p. 19.

commandment to command the captain and all the rest from their functions.' I am afraid that conduct similar in effect to this pirate's is still only too common—among landsmen; as we may conclude it was in Shakspeare's day. 'To be honest, as this world goes,' says Hamlet\* to Polonius, 'is to be one man picked out of ten thousand,' Act ii. Sc. 2. And in *Timon of Athens*, it is the remark of one of the three strangers, that 'Policy sits above conscience,' Act iii. Sc. 2. And yet how often have we been taught, in regard not only to dishonest and unjust but to harsh and ungenerous treatment of others, that 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again!' Matt. vii. 2.

Measure for measure must be answered.

*Henry VI. 3rd Part*, Act ii. Sc. 6.

Like doth quit like, and measure still for measure.

*Measure for Measure*, Act v. Sc. 1.

We know that even heathen moralists, such as Cicero, regarded illiberality as a species of injustice; and though we have a proverb which bids us to be *just before we are generous*, yet we also know that, as Christians, we can never be said to be *truly just*, until we are also really bountiful. It is the twofold stigma of prodigality that it has a direct tendency, by disabling us from giving, to make us unjust both towards God and towards man. Hence it is that while the duty of a charitable temper and disposition

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\* See above, p. 137.

belongs rather to the sixth Commandment, the practical exhibition of that duty in regard to alms-giving may be said to fall more properly under the eighth. In the parable of *the rich man and Lazarus* we see the *measure* which will hereafter be *measured again* to those who *mete* as Dives did to the poor; and how often our poet has alluded to that parable I shall have occasion to mention in a later section.\* The parable of *the prodigal son* has another, and more blessed lesson to teach, besides the evils and injustice of prodigality—a lesson fitted for the pulpit rather than for the stage; but the stage may seize at least upon that portion of the story which represents how ‘the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty,’ Prov. xxiii. 21, and how ‘want shall come as an armed man’ upon the sluggard and the dissolute, Prov. vi. 11.

All things that are,  
Are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd.  
How like a younker, or a *prodigal*,  
The scarf'd bark puts from her native bay,  
Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!  
How like *the prodigal doth she return*;  
With over-weather'd ribs, and ragged sails,  
Lean, rent, and *beggar'd* by the strumpet wind!  
*Mercant of Venice, Act ii. Sc. 6.*

Mr. Bowdler has not spared this fine passage, but he has allowed what follows to stand without

\* See below, Sect. 16.

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curtailment. Oliver is speaking, in *As you like it*, to his unkind and unnatural brother, Orlando :—

*Shall I keep your bogs, and eat busks with them? What prodigal portion have I spent that I should come to such penury?*

Act i. Sc. 1.

The same parable is alluded to in the 1st Part of *King Henry IV*. Act iv. Sc. 2; and again in the 2nd Part of that play, Act i. Sc. 2; in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act ii. Sc. 3; and once more in the *Comedy of Errors*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

On the other hand, the poor widow who, in putting her two mites into the treasury, gave ‘all her living,’ Mark xii. 44, was, I suspect, in our poet’s thoughts, when he wrote :—

*Fool.* How now, nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs,\* and two daughters!

*Lear.* Why, my boy?

*Fool.* If I gave them all my living, I’d keep my coxcombs myself.

Against the evils of covetousness, which the Bible denounces as ‘idolatry,’ our poet has given us, in like manner, no feeble or unfrequent warning. Thus, in *King Henry IV. Part II.*, he bids us note—

How quickly nature falls into revolt

When gold becomes her object.      Act iv. Sc. 4.

And in *Romeo and Juliet*, when Romeo hands to the apothecary a sum of money in payment for

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\* Fool’s caps.

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the poison which the latter, though forbidden to sell it under pain of death, had allowed him to purchase, we read as follows :—

There is thy gold ; worse poison to men's souls,  
Doing more murders in this loathsome world,  
Than these poor compounds that thou may'st not sell :  
I sell thee poison, thou hast sold me none ;—

Act v. Sc. i.

i. e. none as compared with that which I have given you. And, most of all, in *Timon of Athens*, Act iv. Sc. 3, we find a full and very doleful catalogue of the sins and miseries which arise from ‘the love of money—the root,’ as S. Paul teaches us, ‘of all evil.’

There is another species of injustice, of which (as of niggardliness or avarice) the tribunals of this world take no account, and into which, therefore, men are too apt to fall without thought or concern; I mean the misspending of our time and other talents, which God has lent us to occupy and to trade with for His glory, and for the benefit of our fellow-creatures. The notion of our stewardship in this respect, as well as in respect of our pecuniary means, is one which the Bible leaves us no room to doubt of; and accordingly our poet sets it forth with all faithfulness and with his wonted power :—

Thyself and thy belongings  
Are not thine own so proper, as to waste  
Thyself upon thy virtues, them on thee.  
*Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,*

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*Not light them for themselves : for if our virtues  
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike  
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touched  
But to fine issues ; nor Nature never lends  
The smallest scruple of her excellence,  
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines  
Both thanks and use.*

*Measure for Measure, Act i. Sc. 1.*

Moreover, we know how the Bible condemns purpose of doing evil that good may come ; Rom. iii. 8. In like manner, in the *Merchant of Venice*, when Bassanio had urged the Court to pronounce in favour of Antonio, against Shylock—

*Wrest once the law to your authority :  
To do a great right, do a little wrong ;—*

Tia at once virtuously rejects the plea :—

It may not be.

*Act iv. Sc. 1.*

With regard to the administration of justice, I have noted only the following passages as coming within the scope of my design. It is recorded in *Acts* how that

ing Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cesarea to salute Festus. When they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's case unto the king, saying, 'There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix, about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment passed upon him. To whom I answered, it is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused and the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.'

*xxv. 13-16.*

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Well therefore does Archbishop Cranmer, in *King Henry VIII.*, entreat the Lords of Council who were assembled to condemn him unheard :—

I do beseech your lordships,  
That in this case of justice, my accusers,  
Be what they will, may stand forth face to face,  
And freely urge against me.      Act v. Sc. 2.

And well too does the Bishop of Carlisle, in *King Richard II.*, argue the same in behalf of his sovereign against those who had conspired to dethrone him :—

Thieves are not judged, but *they are by to bear*,  
Altho' apparent guilt be seen in them :  
And shall the figure of God's majesty,  
His captain, steward, deputy elect,  
Anointed, crowned, planted many years,  
Be judged by subject and inferior breath,  
And *be himself not present?*      Act iv. Sc. 1.

SECT. 12. *Of the use and abuse of the Tongue.*

'I will speak daggers,' says Hamlet, Act iii. Sc. 2, using a metaphor which the Bible has made familiar to us. 'Swords are in their lips,' says the Psalmist, lxx. 7. And again, 'Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows—even bitter words,' lx. 3. And no doubt there are many cases in which this is found by experience to be too true. For instance :—

"Tis *slander* ;  
Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue

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Out-venoms\* all the worms of Nile ; whose breath  
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie  
All corners of the world : kings, queens, and states,  
Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave  
This viperous slander enters. *Cymbeline*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

And the heinousness of slander lies in this, that othing is more precious to a man than his good ame. There is an admirable sermon of Bishop anderson † upon the text, ‘A good name is better than precious ointment,’ Eccles. vii. 1; in which he observes—the more precious a good name is, the more grievous is their sin who seek to rob others of it. ‘Neither thieves nor murderers are more cruel and injurious than slanderers, backbiters, and else accusers are.’‡ This is vigorously put by that reat divine, but not so effectively as our poet has expressed the same; and he has added the original lea, that though so much is lost by him against whom the sin is committed, nothing is gained by im who commits it :—

Good name in man or woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls :  
Who steals my purse, steals trash ; . . . .  
But he that filches from me my good name,  
Robbs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed. *Othello*, Act iii. Sc. 3.

\* See below, chap. iii. 13, and compare *King Richard II.* :—  
‘ Pierced to the soul with slander’s venom’d spear.’

Act i. Sc. 1.

† Born 1587, died 1662.      ‡ *Works*, vol. i. p. 28.



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Where Mr. Malone has quoted Proverbs xxii. 1, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.' But our poet might also have remembered the following passage in the *Book of Homilies* :—

'Many times there cometh less hurt of a thief than of a railing tongue: for the one taketh away a man's good name; the other taketh but his riches, which is of much less value.'—*Against Contention*, Part 1.

It is in the same strain that the Duke of Norfolk declares, in *King Richard II.* :—

The purest treasure mortal times afford  
Is spotless reputation; that away,  
Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.

Act i. Sc. 1.

When Jaques proposes to Orlando, in *As you like it* —

Will you sit down with me? And we two will rail against our mistress the world, and all our misery :—

how admirable is the answer which the latter makes! —

I will chide no breather in the world but myself; against whom I know most faults.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

And not less just or less scriptural is the argument of Isabel in *Measure for Measure*, when she pleads with the wicked deputy for her brother's life :—

Go to your bosom;  
Knock there; and ask your heart what it doth know  
That's like my brother's fault: if it confess  
A natural guiltiness such as is his,

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Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue  
Against my brother's life.\*                      Act ii. Sc. 2.

This is in keeping with what S. Paul has taught  
viz. that in judging others the consequence  
we condemn ourselves, Rom. ii. 1; an idea  
which our poet has again caught and admirably  
enshrined, when he makes Timon ask—

Wilt thou whip thine own faults in other men?  
*Timon of Athens*, Act v. Sc. 1.

At the same time he does not deny that censure  
or reproof, even of the greatest severity, may be  
sometimes necessary, and that charity itself may  
require us to administer them. Thus Hamlet  
justifies, speaking to his mother :—

I must be cruel, only to be kind.   Act iii. Sc. 4.

And how wise accordingly is the conclusion of  
Benedick, in *Much Ado about Nothing*!—

Happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them  
to silence;    Act ii. Sc. 3.

... can use them for purposes of self-amendment.  
But with regard to censures in general there is no  
action more just or more profound than that the  
opinion we form and the estimate we express of  
the conduct of others depends for the most part  
on our own moral state; and how forcibly and  
eloquently has our poet embodied this truth! The

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Compare the speech of King Henry, quoted below, p. 248 :—  
'Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all.'



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speakers are the gallant Hotspur, Enobarbus, and  
the Duke of Albany.*

Thought 's the slave of life.

*K. Henry IV. 1st Part, Act v. Sc. 4.*

Men's judgments are  
A parcel of their fortunes.

*Ant. and Cleop. Act iii. Sc. 2.*

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile.

*King Lear, Act iv. Sc. 2.*

Compare S. Paul, Tit. i. 15, 'To the pure,' &c.

It follows, as a consequence from this remark, that praise is often a doubtful benefit; and we know that in warning us against it, our Lord himself has gone so far as to say, Luke vi. 26:—

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!  
And how ingeniously again has this sentiment been adopted by Shakspeare, and assigned to the character to whom, of all others, it is most appropriate! viz. *Timon of Athens*:—

*Timon.* If I hope well, I'll never see thee more.

*Alcibiades.* I never did thee harm.

*Timon.* Yea, thou spok'st well of me.

*Alcibiades.* Call'st thou that harm?

*Timon.* Men daily find it such.\*      *Act iv. Sc. 3.*

See also the dialogue between the Duke and the Clown, in *Twelfth Night* :—

*Duke.* How dost thou, my good fellow?

*Clown.* Truly, sir, the better for my foes, and the worse for my friends.

*Duke.* Just the contrary; the better for thy friends.

*Clown.* No, sir, the worse.

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\* See S. Chrysost. *on Acts, Hom. lii.*

can that be?

ry, sir, they praise me and make an ass of me :  
ell me plainly I am an ass ; so that by my foes,  
the knowledge of myself ; and by my friends I am  
ceived, imposed upon].      Act v. Sc. 1.

ne praise of others is harmful, still less  
n praise of ourselves do us good :—  
man praise thee ; and not thine own mouth.

Prov. xxvii. 2.

d to eat much honey ; so for men to search their  
ot glory.      *Ibid.* xxv. 27.

shiness of praise despairs his worth,  
e praised himself bring the praise forth.

*Troilus and Cressida*, Act i. Sc. 3.

own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle ;  
praises itself but in the deed, devours the deed in  
*Ibid.* Act ii. Sc. 3.

our modesty and make foul the clearness of our  
n of ourselves we publish them.

*All's Well that ends Well*, Act i. Sc. 3.

had occasion, in former sections, to  
ie efficacy of prayer and intercession,  
f the practice of *Parental Benediction*,  
pious forefathers doubtless regarded as  
er unavailing. That they should have  
ome effect to *malediction*\* likewise, when  
onounced in a righteous cause, is not to

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cription upon Shakspeare's tombstone, said to have  
himself :—

st be the man that spares these stones,  
d curs'd be he that moves my bones !

eble's *Prælectiones Academicæ*, vol. i. p. 21.

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be wondered at; and for my own part I feel at least no sympathy with the scruples which induced Mr. Bowdler to omit the last line of the passage I am about to quote:—

*Q. Mar.* O! princely Buckingham, I kiss thy hand;—  
Thy garments are not spotted with our blood,  
Nor thou within the compass of my curse.

*Buck.* Nor no one here; for curses never pass  
The lips of those that breathe them in the air.

*Q. Mar.* I'll not believe but they ascend the sky,  
And there awake God's gentle sleeping peace.

*King Richard III.* Act i. Sc. 3.

Instead of omitting these last words, it would have been a wiser course to have drawn attention to the enormity of the crimes, some committed already, and others remaining to be committed by Richard—and the solemn appeal to God's all-seeing eye, in a *public* cause, which especially concerned His own majesty, as King of Kings. If malediction could ever be justifiable, it was justifiable—I had almost said it was charitable—in the case and under the circumstances in which Shakspeare has introduced it.

There is no subject upon which the Bible is more explicit than upon the duty of governing the tongue, not only in matters of *slander*, but in other ways, and especially in regard to the high obligation of abstaining from *all untruth*. And if this duty be neglected we learn no less expressly from the same source the mischief that must follow. See



## *Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 241

Prov. xii. 13. xxi. 23, Eccles. x. 12, James iii. 2-10. And so our poet, on the one hand, cautions us that

Many a man's tongue shakes out his master's undoing ;  
*All's Well that ends Well*, Act ii. Sc. 4.

and, on the other hand, he would encourage us

To delight

No less in truth than life. *Macbeth*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

Moreover, it would seem, he had known of men ‘reputed wise for saying nothing,’ *Merchant of Venice*, Act i. Sc. 1, just as Solomon observes upon the benefit of silence:—

Even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise ; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

Prov. xvii. 28.

The connection between speaking truth and integrity of action, and (what is more common) between falsehood and unrighteousness, is strongly marked in Holy Scripture, and it has not escaped the notice of Shakspeare.\* In the 3rd chapter of S. John’s Gospel our Lord first uses the expression, ‘every one that doeth evil,’ and then, as the reverse of it, ‘he that doeth truth.’ In like manner the same Apostle writes, in his first Epistle, ‘If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth,’ i. 8 ; where the falsehood of speech and the falsehood of action, i. e. unrighteousness, are both combined. And so again,

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\* Nor of Lord Bacon. See his 6th Essay.



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in his second Epistle, he speaks of ‘walking in truth,’ v. 4, i. e. in righteousness and holiness of life. Once more. S. Paul puts the question in the mouth of a disputer of this world:—

If the truth of God hath more abounded through *my lie* (i.e. my sinfulness) unto His glory, why yet am I also judged as *a sinner*?  
Rom iii. 7.

It is the same principle which led our poet to use the word ‘untruth’ for *disloyalty*, i. e. *sin against a king*, in the following passage of *King Richard II.*, where the Duke of York exclaims—

God for His mercy! what a tide of woes  
Comes rushing on this woeful land at once!  
I know not what to do : I would to God,  
(So *my untruth* had not provoked him to it)  
The king had cut off my head with my brother's.  
Act ii. Sc. 2.

### SECT. 13. *Of Humility, Contentment, and Resignation.*

We may well believe that Shakspeare's own experience of life, especially in his early days, had sufficiently confirmed the truth, which he might have learnt from Scripture, that happiness, if it is to be expected at all in this world, is not to be looked for merely in external circumstances:—

Take heed (said our Lord) and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.  
Luke xii. 15.



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And more than this; the ‘uses’ which he draws from ‘adversity’ are, as we shall presently see, among the most valuable lessons which his works contain.

The scene in the *Third Part of King Henry VI.*, which is laid in a chase in the north of England, and in which the dethroned monarch enters disguised, with a Prayer Book in his hand, and is accosted by the two keepers who were on the look-out to apprehend him, affords our poet an excellent opportunity for introducing sentiments such as we are now to speak of:—

*2nd Keep.* Say, what art thou, that talk’st of kings and queens?  
*K. Hen.* More than I seem, and less than I was born to:

A man at least, for less I should not be;

And men may talk of kings, and why not I?

*2nd Keep.* Ay, but thou talk’st as if thou wert a king.

*K. Hen.* Why, so I am *in mind*, and that’s enough.

*2nd Keep.* But if thou be a king, where is thy crown?

*K. Hen.* My crown is *in my heart*, not on my head;

Not deck’d with diamonds and Indian stones,

Nor to be seen; my crown is called **CONTENT**;

Crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.

Act iii. Sc. i.

In illustration of this, Mr. Steevens quotes that excellent old song in Percy’s *Reliques of Antient English Poetry*, i. 213, beginning with:—

My minde to me a kingdome is.

But here again I cannot help suspecting that our poet’s school-learning was running in his head, and reminded him of some one of those numerous

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passages\* which represent the stoical notion that the *wise man* is the truly *royal* personage—‘King of kings, and inferior only to Jove himself.’ See Horace i *Epist.* i. 106, sq.; or what comes nearer to the circumstances before us, the well-known stanzas in the 2nd Book of Odes:—

Redditum Cyri solio Phraaten  
Dissidens plebi numero beatorum  
Eximit Virtus, populumque falsis  
    Dedocet uti  
Vocibus; *regnum et diadema tutum*  
Deferens uni propriamque laurum,  
Quisquis ingentes oculo irretorto  
    Spectat acervos.

Nor does it seem unreasonable to conjecture, considering the superabundant evidence before us of Shakspeare’s familiarity with the ideas of Scripture, that the text—‘Behold, the *kingdom* of God is *within you*,’ Luke xvii. 21, and others of a similar character, may have contributed to the sentiment which he has put into King Henry’s mouth. It is in the same vein, though carried somewhat further, that the ‘honest chronicler,’ Griffith, speaks of Cardinal Wolsey, after his decease:—

His overthrow heaped happiness upon him,—

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\* The most remarkable perhaps is that in the *Thyestes* of Seneca, the chorus beginning

‘Tandem Regia nobilis,’ v. 336; which might have been known, if not to Shakspeare, to the author of the song in Bp. Percy’s collection.

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For then, and not till then, he felt himself,  
And found the *blessedness of being little*.

K. Henry VIII. Act iv. Sc. 2.

And the churlish Apemantus, in *Timon of Athens*, philosophizes for once to some purpose when he says :—

*Best state, contentless,*  
Hath a distracted and most wretched being,  
*Worse than the worst, content.*      Act iv. Sc. 3.

In other words, as the old lady in attendance upon Anne Bullen testifies, in *King Henry VIII.*,

## Our content

i. e. our best possession. This was spoken in answer to the reflection of Anne, which her own subsequent fate so fully verified :—

See Jeremiah xlv. 5; and compare again *Othello*:

*Poor and content, is rich, and rich enough.*

**Act iii. Sc. 3.**

In this same play we meet also with the rule, which we have so much need to bear in mind, if the pleasures of life are to be wisely and innocently enjoyed :—

Let's teach ourselves that honourable stop,  
*Not to out-sport discretion*—                           Act ii. Sc. 3.

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a rule which may remind us of the exhortation of  
S. Paul :—

Let your moderation be known unto all men.

Phil. iv. 5.

But to come back now to *King Henry VI.* In an earlier part of the play before quoted, and on the very day of the battle of Towton, which established his antagonist Edward on the throne, and while the fight was raging in the distance, we hear that pious but feeble-minded prince thus moralizing :—

Here on this molehill will I sit me down.  
To whom God will, there be the victory.

Would I were dead ! if God's good will were so ;  
For what is in this world, but grief and woe ?  
O God ! methinks it were a happy life,  
To be no better than a homely swain :  
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,  
To carve out dials quaintly point by point.

So minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years,  
Pass'd over to the end they were created,  
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.  
Ah ! what a life were this ! how sweet ! how lovely !  
Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade  
To shepherds, looking on their silly sheep,  
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy  
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery ?  
O ! yes it doth ; a thousand times it doth.  
And to conclude—the shepherd's homely curds,  
His cold thin drink out of a leather bottle,

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His wonted sleep\* under a fresh tree's shade,  
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,  
Is far beyond a prince's delicates ;  
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,  
His body couched in a curious bed,  
Where care, mistrust, and treason wait on him.

*Act ii. Sc. 5.*

The argument here adduced in favour of a humble station of life is its comparative freedom from anxiety and alarm. And such an argument, just because it is superficial rather than substantial, comes with propriety enough from a weak though amiable character like that of King Henry VI. But our poet was well aware that deeper, and I may add, more Scriptural motives were to be assigned for the choice which such a character would make out of mere pusillanimity. The greater exposure to temptation, already alluded to in the case of Wolsey, and to which all are liable in proportion to the elevation and grandeur they attain, affords a ground for contentment in moderate, and even in lowly circumstances, which minds, not the weakest, but the strongest and best, will be most ready to appreciate. Not only is it true—

They that stand high have many blasts to shake them,  
And when they fall they dash themselves to pieces ;—  
*King Richard III. Act i. Sc. 3.*

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\* See Eccles. v. 12, and compare in *K. Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 1, the King's soliloquy beginning ‘Upon the King,’ &c.



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but—and this is the more important consideration to the Christian's mind :—

Most subject is the fattest soil to weeds.

*King Henry IV. 2nd Part, Act iv. Sc. 4.*

It is, moreover, in a lowly and retired station of life that we are led to 'find,' as the exiled Duke testifies in *As you like it*, Act ii. Sc. 1,

Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

Hence the Danish courtiers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern gave a wise return to Hamlet's salutation—‘ My excellent good friends—how do ye both?’—when they replied, or rather, the latter said, speaking for them both :—

Happy, in that we are not over happy.

*Hamlet, Act ii. Sc. 2.*

So too, Nerissa, in the *Merchant of Venice*, remarks, ‘ It is no mean happiness to be seated *in the mean*.’ Act i. Sc. 2. And the blinded Gloster, in *King Lear*, confesses :—

*I stumbled when\* I saw. Full oft 'tis seen,*

*Our means† secure us; and our mere defects*

*Prove our commodities.* *Act iv. Sc. 1.*

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\* See John ix. 39-41; Matt. xiii. 13.

† I retain the reading of the original editions, both quarto and folio. Mr. Malone does so likewise, but he understands ‘means’ (plural) in the same sense as those who have adopted Pope’s emendation ‘our mean secures us,’ i. e. *our middle state*, as Warburton interprets. It does not seem to have occurred to any of the critics that the verb ‘secure’ may here not improbably signify *make careless* (see above, p. 42), and then ‘means’ will be opposed to ‘defects,’ and signify *the things we have*, ‘our commodities,’ and in Gloster’s

It is in a calmer, but not less truthful spirit of Christian Philosophy that King Henry V., on the night before the battle of Agincourt, teaches us how 'our defects,' i. e. *our wants*, our deficiencies in the comforts and conveniences of life, may 'prove our commodities,' and so suggests an additional motive, not merely for contentment in a humble, but for resignation in an adverse lot, when he argues:—

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distil it out;  
For our bad neighbour makes us early stirrers,  
Which is both healthful and good husbandry.  
Besides, they are our *outward consciences*,  
And preachers to us all; admonishing  
That we should dress us fairly for our end.  
Thus may we gather *boney* from the *weed*,  
And make a moral of the devil himself.

*K. Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 1.

On a former occasion the same king had taught us:—

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest *stillness* and *humility*;                   Act iii. Sc. 1.

according to the well-known Apostolic precept that

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*case, his sight.* We may compare the use of 'gentle' as a verb, in *King Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 3—

'This day shall gentle his condition'—  
i. e. make him a gentleman. And the similar use of 'niggard' in *Julius Caesar*, Act iv. Sc. 3. I am surprised that Bishop Hurd, in his note (highly commended by Mr. Hallam) upon Horace's 'callida junctura' of words, though he instances Shakspeare's art in converting *substantives* into *verbs*, says nothing of the same conversion in regard to 'adjectives.'—See Hurd's *Works*, vol. i. p. 78.



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we should 'study to be quiet,' 1 Thess. iv. 11. In like manner, the advice of the 'good Duke Humphrey' of Gloster to his Duchess, under the disgrace and punishment which she had brought upon herself—

Thy greatest help is quiet, gentle Nell;  
I pray thee, sort thy heart to patience—

K. Henry VI. 2nd Part, Act ii. Sc. 4

may not unfitly be compared with the admonition of the Evangelical Prophet :—

Their strength is to sit still. In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. Isaiah xxx. 7, 16.

We know the prominence which the New Testament gives to the grace and duty of *humility*. And surely the following lines could only have occurred to one who had deeply reflected upon, and desired to practice\* that Christian teaching:—

It is the witness still of excellency  
To put a strange face on his own perfection  
*Much ado about Nothing.*

*Much ado about Nothing*, Act ii. Sc. 3

Nor can we reasonably doubt that when our poet wrote in *King Richard II.*,—

*Pride must have a fall;*                                   Act v. Sc. 5

he had in his mind that saying in the Book of Proverbs :—

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before fall. xvi. 18. See also xxix. 23.

\* See the author's *Sermon preached at Stratford*, p. 26, note.

The same idea occurs again, but with a rich addition from Shakspeare's own imagination, in these well-known lines of *Macbeth* :—

I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself,  
And falls on the other [side].      Act i. Sc. 7.

Meanwhile, amid all his commendations of a low estate, our poet was fully sensible of the contemptuous and unworthy treatment which poverty too often meets with at the hands of a vain and mammon-serving world. He knew the testimony of Solomon :—

The poor is hated even of his own neighbour. Prov. xiv. 20.  
All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? He pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.      *Ibid.* xix. 7.

And he also knew, as it would seem, the words of the wise son of Sirach, in the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus :—

A poor man *being down* is thrust away by his friends.      xiii. 21.

for we read in *Hamlet*, Act iii. Sc. 2.,

The great man *down*, you mark, his favorite\* flies.

Again, Solomon testifies, in Ecclesiastes ix. 16 :—

The poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

\* Compare the speech of the Duke of Buckingham, quoted above, p. 219, and of Achilles, in *Troilus and Cressida*, Act iii. Sc. 3. See also *Timon of Athens*, Act i. Sc. 1 :—

'When Fortune in her shift,' &c.



To which the author of Ecclesiasticus adds:—

When a rich man speaketh, every man holdeth his tongue, and look what he saith, they extol it to the clouds; but if a poor man speak, they say, what fellow is this? and if he stumble, they will help to overthrow him. xiii. 23.

All this exhibits a painful picture. But what says our poet also, speaking doubtless not only as a student of the Scriptures, but as an interpreter of human life from his own experience? First we read in *King Lear* :—

Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;  
Robes and furred gowns hide all.              Act iv. Sc. 6.

Next, in *Merry Wives of Windsor*:

If money go before, all ways do lie open.

Act ii. Sc. 2

And again, in the same play, Act iii. Sc. 4 :—

O ! what a world of vile ill-favoured faults  
Looks handsome in three hundred pound a year !

And once more, in *Timon of Athens*:

Faults that are rich, are fair.

Act i. Sc. 2.

But sad as the foregoing picture is, it is made still more melancholy by the addition of ingratitude when a rich and bountiful man, having fallen into poverty, meets with no better return than desertion and contempt from those whom he has benefited—the case of *Timon* himself:—

2nd Serv.

As we do turn our backs

From our companion thrown into his grave;



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So his familiars *to\** his buried fortunes  
Slink all away ; leave their false vows with him,  
Like empty purses pick'd, and his poor self,  
A dedicated beggar to the air,  
With his disease of *all-shunn'd poverty*,  
Walks, like contempt, alone.

Act iv. Sc. 2.

And for one who had not the lessons and consolations of revealed religion to fall back upon, such a trial is not improperly represented as too great. But it is not so with the Christian hero, like S. Paul, who 'has learnt, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content ;' nay, who 'in every thing gives thanks.' And Hamlet describes his friend Horatio as approaching, at least, to that high standard :

Thou hast been  
As one, in suffering all, who suffers nothing ;  
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
Has ta'en *with equal banks*.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

And, looked at from this point of view, we may accept that sentiment of Hamlet, which otherwise would savour of an infidel philosophy :—

There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.  
Act ii. Sc. 2.

He is not speaking of *moral* good and evil. He had before said 'Denmark's a prison ;' to which Rosencrantz demurred—'We think not so, my lord.' Hamlet replies, 'Why then 'tis none to you:

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\* Sir T. Hanmer's reading, 'from,' seems preferable.



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for there is nothing,' &c., &c. So that the passage becomes parallel to Horace's ;—

Quod petis, hic est ;  
Est Ulubris, *animus* si te non deficit *equus*.

And to Milton's ;—

The *mind* is its own place ; and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

That our poet is entitled to the full benefit of this interpretation—unless we will suppose that he designed, in this single instance\* to give a sceptical turn to Hamlet's philosophical character—we may reasonably conclude from (among other proofs) a sentiment which he assigns to Troilus, and which sufficiently indicates belief in the essential and objective character of moral truth :—

We may not think the justness of each act  
Such and no other than event doth form it.  
*Troilus and Cressida*, Act ii. Sc. 2.

Nor was this beyond what was to be expected

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\* Warburton has given a semi-infidel interpretation to another saying of Hamlet, in Act v. Sc. 2: 'Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows,' &c., but without sufficient reason. The reading is doubtful. Johnson's interpretation is much more satisfactory; but I am inclined to think that Hamlet, in his morbid state of mind, means to say, that since we can attain to no true knowledge in this life—since no man *really knows* about anything which goes on in this world—secretly alluding to the plausible, but most wicked, character and doings of his uncle—'to leave (it) betimes' can be no great loss. In short we neither *know* what *is* here, nor, as he has remarked elsewhere, what *is to be* hereafter. See his famous soliloquy in Act iii. Sc. 1, alluded to below, p. 267.



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from a heathen. Shakspeare might have remembered the Ovidian distich :—

Careat successibus, opto,  
Quisquis ab eventu facta probanda putet.

The proverb that *Sorrows never come single* is one which I am tempted to recur\* to in passing, on account of the felicitous and at the same time varied forms in which our author has expressed it. Thus, in *Hamlet* :—

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions. Act iv. Sc. 5.

And again, in the same play :—

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,  
So fast they follow. *Ibid.* Sc. 7.

Again in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* :—

One sorrow never comes, but brings an heir  
That may succeed, as his inheritor. Act i. Sc. 4.

But however thick misfortunes may come upon us, the same author who thus leads us to expect them, has not failed to prescribe, no less plainly and frequently, the remedy which a Christian knows it is his duty to apply, when occasion requires, in his own case. When news is brought to King Henry VI. that he is utterly bereft of all that the English crown had possessed in France, his reply is :—

Cold news, Lord Somerset; but *God's will be done!*  
*King Henry VI. 2nd Part, Act iii. Sc. 1.*

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\* See above, p. 152.



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When Brandon announces to the Duke of Buckingham that he is arrested for high treason, and must go as a prisoner to the Tower, his reply is :—

*The will of Heaven  
Be done in this, and all things! I obey.*

*King Henry VIII. Act i. Sc. 1.*

To his mother, the widowed Queen Elizabeth, in her affliction for the death of her husband, King Edward IV., the Marquess of Dorset thus administers consolation, founded upon the well-known passage in the Book of Job, i. 21 :—

Comfort, dear mother; God is much displeased  
That you take with unthankfulness his doing;  
In common worldly things 'tis called—ungrateful,  
With dull unwillingness to repay a debt,  
Which with a bounteous hand was kindly lent;  
Much more to be thus opposite with Heaven,  
For\* it requires the royal debt it lent you.

*King Richard III. Act ii. Sc. 2.*

Nor does the Christian philosophy of our poet stop here. As the Bible teaches that ‘it is’—or may and ought to be—‘good to be afflicted,’ Ps. cxix., and that troubles are mercifully† sent to try us for our greater benefit, or to wean us from evil, see Job v. 17, Ps. xciv. 12, Heb. xii. 5–11; so we learn, upon the testimony of the banished Duke, in *As you like it*, Act ii. Sc. 1 :—

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\* i. e. Because.

† See above, p. 116, note.



*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 257

Sweet are the uses of adversity ;  
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

And Leontes confesses, in *Winter's Tale* :—

And the wise Nestor is made to say,

In the reproof of chance  
Lies the true proof of men.

*Troilus and Cressida*, Act i. Sc. 3

**And Antony would give us this advice :—**

Bid that welcome  
Which comes to punish us ; and we punish it,  
Seeming to bear it lightly.

*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act iv. Sc. 12.

Finally, it is left also to a heathen to teach the elementary lesson\* that no distresses or afflictions, however many or great, should be allowed to provoke us into destruction of the life, of which, as no one (except by just authority) can lawfully deprive us, so neither can we lawfully deprive ourselves :—

*Gloster.* You ever gentle gods, take my breath from me ;  
Let not my worser † spirit tempt me again  
To die before you please.      *King Lear*, Act iv. Sc. 6.

Even in the mouth of Brutus (who is eventually represented as putting an end to his own life, much as King Saul had done, and as Antony

\* See above, p. 149. † See above, p. 19. ‡ See above, p. 150.

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afterwards did), our poet has ventured to place substantially the same sentiment :—

*Cassius.* If we do lose this battle, then is this  
The very last time we shall be together ;  
What are you then determined to do ?

*Brutus.* Even by the rule of that philosophy  
By which I did blame Cato for the death  
Which he did give himself :—I know not how,  
But I do find it *cowardly and vile*,  
For fear of what might fall, so to prevent\*  
The time of life :—*arming myself with patience*,  
To stay† the providence of some high powers,  
That govern us below.      *Julius Cæsar*, Act v. Sc. 1.

In looking back upon the subjects of this and the four preceding sections, in which an outline has been sketched of the main departments of the duty of a Christian towards his neighbours, I am tempted to add, as a summary illustration of the whole, two short passages in which our poet has drawn to perfection the characters of virtue both in low and in high life—that is, of a good peasant and a good prince; of the peasant in Corin the shepherd in *As you like it*; of the prince in Malcolm (afterwards Malcolm III. or Canmore) the successor of Duncan, in *Macbeth* :—

*Corin.* Sir, I am a true labourer : I earn that I eat, get that I wear ; owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness ; glad of other

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\* i. e. to anticipate the full, appointed time. See above, p. 40.

† i. e. stay for, wait upon.

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men's good, content with my harm : and the greatest of my pride is, to see my ewes graze, and my lambs suck.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

*Malcolm.* I never was forsworn ;  
Scarcely have coveted what was mine own ;  
At no time broke my faith ; would not betray  
The devil to his fellow, and **DELIGHT**  
**NO LESS IN TRUTH THAN LIFE.**

Act iv. Sc. 3.

**SECT. 14. Of Holy Scripture, the Christian Ministry, and Church Membership.**

For Shakspeare's own estimation of Holy Scripture, we have no occasion to look beyond the evidence contained in every page of the present volume. To him, I doubt not, it was—what it is to every faithful reader—‘the Word of God unto Salvation.’ In *King Henry VI. 2nd Part*, Act ii. Sc. 5 (where reference is made to Exod. xxii. 18), he speaks of it as ‘God’s Book ;’\* and his habitual regard for its authority may be traced in language such as that which he has put into the mouth of Iago :—

Trifles light as air  
Are to the jealous confirmations strong  
As proofs of *Holy Writ.*      *Othello*, Act iii. Sc. 3.

At the same time, the age in which he lived would not suffer him to be ignorant how liable men are, from various causes, to pervert God’s

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\* See also below, p. 262, ‘The books of God.’



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Word, and give to it a meaning which it was never meant to convey.

In religion,  
What damned error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and *approve\** it with a text  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

*Mercant of Venice*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

Compare the speech of the wicked Gloster, quoted above, p. 66.

Moreover, our poet's own study of the Bible had discovered to him how much judgment and caution are required in reconciling and adjusting texts which, though susceptible of perfect harmony, to a hasty and superficial reader may appear discordant, or even contradictory. When King Richard II. is confined in the dungeon of Pomfret Castle, he amuses himself by comparing his prison to the world, and he imagines his own thoughts to form the population, which is necessary to give verisimilitude to the comparison :—

And these same thoughts [are, he says,]  
In humours like the people of this world ;  
For no thought is contented. The better sort—  
As thoughts of things divine—are intermixed  
With scruples, and do set THE WORD itself  
Against THE WORD.—  
As thus—Come little ones; † and then again—  
It is as hard to come, as for a camel  
To thread the postern of a needle's eye. ‡

*K. Richard II.* Act iv. Sc. 5.

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\* Justify it.

† See Matt. xi. 28.

‡ See Matt. xix. 24.

The three last lines are omitted by Mr. Bowdler. Surely they savour of no irreverence; and, when taken with the context, they point not unprofitably to difficulties and dangers which every reader of the Scriptures must expect to encounter, and which every well-disposed and well-instructed reader will be enabled to overcome.

And as no intentional irreverence towards Holy Scripture, often as he quotes or refers to it, is to be found in our poet's works, so neither does he ever allow himself to speak of the ministers of religion, as other play-writers have done, with disrespect, still less with derision. That he entertained indeed a just sense of the dignity and responsibility of their sacred office, and of the mischiefs that must ensue whenever it is disgraced by insufficiency, or perverted by unfaithfulness; that he regarded them as ambassadors for Christ, and as intercessors, through Him, in behalf of man, we need no further proof than the speech of Prince John of Lancaster, in the *Second Part of King Henry IV.* He is addressing Scroop, Archbishop of York, who had joined the Earl of Northumberland's party against King Henry, the Prince's father, in the Forest of Gaultree:—

My Lord of York, it better showed with you,  
When\* that your flock, assembled by the bell,  
Encircled you to hear with reverence

---

\* See above, p. 21.



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Your exposition on the holy text,  
Than now to see you here an iron man,\*  
Cheering a rout of rebels with your drum,  
Turning the word to sword, and life to death.  
That man that sits within a monarch's heart,  
And ripens in the sunshine of his favour,  
Would he abuse the countenance of the king,  
Alack, what mischiefs might he set abroach,  
In shadow of such greatness ! With you, lord bishop,  
It is even so. Who hath not heard it spoken,  
How deep you were within the Books of God?  
To us, the speaker in His parliament ;  
To us, the imagined voice of God HIMSELF ;  
The very opener and intelligencer  
Between the grace, the sanctities of Heaven,  
And our dull workings. † O ! who shall believe,  
But you misuse the reverence of your place ;  
Employ the countenance and grace of Heaven,  
As a false favourite doth his prince's name,  
In deeds dishonourable ? You have taken up,‡  
Under the counterfeited zeal of God,  
The subjects of his substitute, my father ;  
And both against the peace of Heaven and him,  
Have here upswarmed them.      Act iv. Sc. 2.

After reading this speech, it is sad to think that the same Prince John, in the next scene, would seem to father upon God his own treachery towards the rebels, when he says :—

Heaven, and not we, hath safely fought to-day.  
So prone are we all to make religion the cloak, or  
even the minister of sin !

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\* i. e. clad in armour. † i. e. 'Labours of thought.'—STEEVENS.  
‡ Levied.

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 263

But our poet, however well disposed towards the clergy, does not fail to preach out of his own *pulpit*, that if they would retain the respect to which they are entitled by their office, they must themselves give good heed to the instruction which they deliver to others. Thus, King Henry VI. rebukes his great-uncle, Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester :—

Fye, uncle Beaufort ! I have heard you preach,  
That malice was a great and grievous sin :  
And will not you maintain the thing you teach,  
But prove a chief offender in the same ?

*K. Henry VI. 1st Part, Act iii. Sc. 1.*

Or, as S. Paul expresses it, ‘Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?’ Rom. ii. 21. Thus too the amiable Ophelia, when she had listened to the good advice of her brother Laertes, assures him :—

I shall the effect of this good lesson \* keep,  
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,  
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
Whilst, like a puffed and reckless libertine,

---

\* It was a saying of the pious Bp. Wilson, that the only true proof of a good sermon is its *making people better*. Shakspeare has anticipated the remark, in substance, when he writes, in the *Merchant of Venice* :—

*Portia.* Good sentences, and well pronounced !  
*Nerissa.* They would be better, if well followed.  
Act i. Sc. 2.

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Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,  
 And reck's not bis own read.\*     *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 3.

Comp. S. Matthew xxiii. 3, 4.

At the same time, our poet is not unreasonable. He knew that the duty of the clergy requires them to teach, and that charitable allowance is to be made for them, if, not in wilfulness or in hypocrisy, but from the imperfection incident to our common nature, they fall short, in practice, of their own lessons :—

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. *It is a good divine that follows bis own instructions.* I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. *Merchant of Venice*, Act i. Sc. 2.

An observation which must find an echo in every clergyman's breast.

There can be no good cause to doubt that Shakspeare was a member of the Reformed Church of England ; in other words, that he was a true Catholic Christian ; and as such, a Protestant against the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome. Yet, strange to say, the attempt has been made to represent him as a Romanist ! So at least it would seem from the 'Copy of Shakspeare's Will' which used to be exhibited not many years ago in the room at Stratford-upon-Avon, where the so-called 'Shakspeare's relics' are preserved and shown to

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\* 'Heeds not his own lessons.'—POPE. Read=counsel.

visitors. That this ‘copy’ is a forgery has been proved by comparing it with the real will, deposited in Doctors’ Commons, from which the document commonly prefixed to editions of our poet’s works, and truly called ‘Shakspeare’s Will,’ is taken. The supposititious document has a preamble much longer than the genuine one; from which also it differs widely both in tone and expression—the differences being mostly such as to leave no doubt that the forger’s design was to claim our poet for the Romish Church.\* That such a claim is utterly groundless might be proved abundantly from the internal evidence of his works. Not to lay stress upon the expression ‘Popish tricks† and ceremonies’ in *Titus Andronicus*, Act v. Sc. 1 (because that play, as I have said before, is most probably not Shakspeare’s), it is sufficient to refer to the character of Cardinal Beaufort in the *First Part of King Henry VI.*, and

\* See Preface to *Religious and Moral Sentences from Shakspeare*, by a member of the Shakspeare Society, 1843. ‘The spurious will mentioned above is not to be confounded with (though it may have owed its origin to) the will of John Shakspeare, which purported to that of our poet’s father, though not discovered till ‘about the year 1770,’ and which is still more plainly upon the face of it a Romanist document. The history of its discovery, real or pretended, is curious. See Drake’s *Shakspeare and his Times*, vol. i. pp. 8–16, and Malone’s *Life*, p. 516 sq. The latter concludes that the document in question, if genuine, was the will of another John Shakspeare—not the father nor any relation of our poet. Mr. Dyce, *Life*, p. 117, mentions a tradition that Shakspeare died a Romanist, but he does not attach to it any weight.

† Mr. Bowdler has altered this into ‘idle tricks.’

to the manner in which the pretended supremacy of the Pope is not only repudiated in *King John*, but, moreover, is shown in *King Henry VIII.*, to be destructive of the just authority of the episcopate. I allude to the passage in which the Earl of Surrey begins his charge against Wolsey :—

First, that, without the king's assent or knowledge,  
You wrought to be a legate, by which power  
You maimed the jurisdiction of all bishops.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

It is remarked by A. W. Schlegel, in his admirable *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, that Shakspeare, amidst the rancour of religious parties, takes a delight in painting the condition of a monk, and always represents his influence as beneficial.\* With regard to the monk in *Romeo and Juliet*, I quite agree that 'the discourse of the pious old man is full of deep meaning.'† But what are we to think of the duke disguised as a monk, in *Measure for Measure*, and who, according to Schlegel, carries out the disguise so perfectly, that, 'contrary to the well-known proverb, the cowl (in his case) seems really to make a monk ?' Ministering to Claudio in prison, and encouraging him against the fear of death, he is made to say :—

Thy best of rest is sleep,  
And that thou oft provok'st, yet grossly fear'st  
Thy death,‡ which is no more :—      Act iii. Sc. 1.

\* Vol. ii. p. 169.      † *Ibid.* p. 188. See above, p. 126.  
‡ Compare Lucretius, lib. iii. 1058, *sq.* and 990.

a sentiment which calls forth the ‘indignation’ of Johnson, and which our poet’s most indulgent critics have been somewhat puzzled to account for. But what if he intended to represent the monk as in reality an unbeliever? There can be no doubt that Popery, from the excess and exorbitancy of its demands upon the faith of its adherents, has a tendency to produce reaction which has often led to open, and still more to secret infidelity, especially in the monastic orders, and in the priesthood; and that an opinion, or prejudice, to this effect prevailed\* in Shakspeare’s day. The same sentiment occurs to Hamlet in his famous soliloquy:—

To die—to sleep—

*No more;*—

But then he presently corrects the thought:—

To die—to sleep—

To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there’s the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,†  
Must give us pause.‡

Act iii. Sc. 1.

And in a previous speech, Act i. Sc. 4, he had expressly spoken of the soul, as ‘a thing immortal.’

\* See, for example, Lord Burghley’s *Advice to his Son Robert*, afterwards Earl of Salisbury. ‘Suffer not thy sons to pass the Alps, for they shall learn nothing there but pride, blasphemy, and Atheism.’ Nares’ *Life of Lord Burghley*, vol. iii. p. 513. Peck’s *Desiderata Curiosa*, p. 47.

† Turmoil, bustle.

‡ Make us hesitate, and think of what may come after death.

See also the Dialogue in *Cymbeline*, between Posthumus and the Gaoler, quoted below, p. 287.

Returning to the Church-membership of our poet, if we are persuaded he was not a Romanist, we are equally certain he was no Puritan. ‘Young Charbon the Puritan, and old Poysam the Papist,’ are named together in a passage of *All's well that ends well*, Act i. Sc. 3, not illnaturedly, but as if the writer had no more sympathy with the one than with the other. Probably, if the truth were known, of the two he had less liking for the new-fangled species of religionism which had sprung up within his own time. We must not lay any great stress upon what passes in conversation between two such worthies as Sir Andrew Ague-Cheek and Sir Toby Belch; yet the following dialogue indicates, no doubt, a certain amount of popular feeling; and I think we may gather from it that our poet desired to side with those who could feel respect for piety and earnestness *in any shape*, rather than with the ignorant multitude who, without knowing why, would be prepared to persecute\* it :—

*Sir Toby.* Possess † us, possess us; tell us something of him.

*Maria.* Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan.

*Sir Andr.* O, if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog.

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\* Our poet's just dislike of *all* religious persecution may be inferred from *Winter's Tale*, where Paulina says :—

It is an heretic that makes the fire,  
Not she that burns in't.

Act. ii. Sc. 5.

† Inform us.

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*Sir Toby.* What, for being a Puritan? thy exquisite reason, dear knight.

*Sir Andr.* I have no exquisite reason for't, but I have reason good enough. *Twelfth Night,* Act ii. Sc. 3.

At the same time he does not attempt to keep from view, what he must have discovered from his own experience, that religious zeal, such as was manifested by the Puritans, is often hollow, and often both mistaken in its principles and mischievous in its results. We may not be able to determine the precise drift, or even the true reading—for Tyrwhitt and Malone concur in questioning the present text—of a speech of the Clown in *All's well that ends well*; but we cannot doubt, I think, that it implies distrust, to some extent at least, of the Puritanical character:—

Though honesty be no Puritan, yet it will do no hurt; it will wear the *surplice of humility* over the *black gown of a big heart*.

Act i. Sc. 3.

That is, as I suppose, an honest man will not be troubled with unnecessary scruples, especially in a case where his obedience is required to a lawful command, however the command may be distasteful to himself. He will put on the surplice—to which the Puritans objected. But still when he has done so, though so far not a Puritan, this is no security that he may not be all the while, ‘intus et in cute,’ as bad as if he were—having as proud a heart as if he wore a black gown. Shakespeare generally uses the word ‘big,’ where moral

qualities are concerned, in a bad sense. This is in character with the petulance of the Clown; but here again I could suspect that our poet wished to intimate that though he had no liking for the Puritans, yet he would not suffer others who might be as bad or worse to run them down. In this, as in other countless instances, he shows himself the *thorough Englishman*; who, though he has his likes and dislikes, and will not conceal them, yet, above them all, *loves to see fair play*. We have another Clown in *Winter's Tale*, who cannot quite let the Puritans alone, and yet alludes to them in a good-humoured way. Mr. Bowdler, however, in his love of fair-play, having altered 'Popish tricks,' thought it necessary to *omit* the words to which I now allude. They occur in the scene where the Clown, son of the old shepherd, reputed father of Perdita, gives account of the preparations made by his supposed sister for the sheep-shearing feast:—

She hath made \* me four-and-twenty nosegays for the shearers: three-man † song-men all, and very good ones . . . but one Puritan amongst them, and he *sings psalms to bornpipes*.

Act iv. Sc. 2.

The utmost offence which appears to be committed in these words is, that the Clown playfully satirizes the objectionable practice which the Puritans introduced, and which is still, unhappily, kept

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\* See above, p. 15.      † i. e. singers of catches in three parts.

**up in some places, of singing sacred songs to jiggisb tunes.\***

There are other passages of a more serious caste in which Shakspeare, without mentioning the Puritans, may be thought to have had them in his view. Such is the case, for instance, as Warburton has remarked, in *Timon of Athens*, where Timon's servant, speaking of Sempronius, one of his master's false friends, observes :—

How fairly this lord strives to appear foul! takes virtuous copies  
to be wicked! like those that under bot ardent zeal would set  
whole realms on fire. Act iii. Sc. 3.

A remarkable prediction of what actually came to pass less than thirty years after our poet's death! And it is not improbable that they are alluded to in what follows from the mouth of Polonius:—

We are oft to blame in this,—  
*'Tis too much proved*,—that with devotion's visage  
And pious action, we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself. Hamlet, Act iii. Sc. 1.

We may now inquire what positive evidence is to be produced respecting Shakspeare's conformity as a member of the Church of England.† The most conclusive proof, perhaps, is the fact of his standing as a sponsor‡ to William Walker, whom

\* Compare *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act ii. Sc. 1. 'There is also a reference to the Puritans in *Pericles' Prince of Tyre*, Act iv. Sc. 6.

<sup>†</sup> See above, p. 140, and below, p. 274.

<sup>1</sup> See the Author's Sermon preached at Stratford, p. 22.

he mentions in his will as his godson, and who was baptised at Stratford, Oct. 16, 1608. The familiar use of the response *Amen* (the τὸ Ἀμῆν of S. Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 16), which occurs in our author's plays *more than sixty times* (and in some places not very appropriately, being put into the mouth of heathen characters), may also be regarded as another indication to that effect. There is something singularly solemn and impressive in his employment of it towards the close of *King Henry V.* :—

That English may as French, French Englishmen,  
Receive\* each other—God speak to this AMEN.

And again, at the end of *King Richard III.* :—

That peace may long live here—God say AMEN.

From our poet's allusion to the observance of Sunday not much is to be inferred—except that it would seem, in his time, to have been the most usual day for the celebration of marriages. In *Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio, in answer to Baptista's question *how he had sped* with his daughter Katharina, replies :—

We have 'greed so well together,  
That upon Sunday is the wedding day. Act ii. Sc. i.

Whether this remark may help to throw any light upon a passage in *Much ado about nothing*, over the meaning of which critics have disagreed,

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\* See Rom. xv. 7.

ot undertake to say ; but it may be worth  
ng. Benedict says to Claudio :—

never see a bachelor of threescore again ? Go to, i'  
hou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the  
and *sigh away Sundays*. Act i. Sc. 1.

away the days which, if married on Sunday,  
e to remind you most of all of the mistake  
le. Neither Warburton's explanation that  
days, the days formerly (he says) of most  
diversion, will be passed uncomfortably ;  
vens', that there is probably an allusion to  
t manner in which the Sabbath was observed  
'uritans, appears satisfactory. It would be  
to suggest that Sunday is the day of the  
which is generally spent *most domestically*.

not probable that at the court of Cleopatra  
ference was understood between Sundays  
rking days, unless it could be supposed  
notion had come down by tradition from  
ivity of the Israelites in Egypt ; and then  
go far to settle an important question in  
!—but our poet has not scrupled to speak,  
*Henry and Cleopatra*, of ' a worky-day fortune ;'  
a fortune not rich and splendid, but ordi-  
common-place, see Act i. Sc. 2 ; just as,  
propriety which admits of no question, he  
Marcellus to ask Horatio, in *Hamlet* :—  
*Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task  
does not divide the Sunday from the week ?*

Act i. Sc. 1.

In the same scene we have a reference to the season of Christmas, and to the traditions, that at that season, the cock—

The bird of dawning singeth all night long :  
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad ;  
The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,  
No fairy\* takes, nor witch hath power to charm :  
So hallowed and so gracious is the time !

This passage, so beautiful in its simplicity, could only have been written by one who had the sense and feeling of a true Christian and loyal member of the Church in regard to the nativity of our Blessed Lord. Of the two other great festivals I am not aware that our poet makes mention, except to let us know, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act iii. Sc. 1, that 'new doublets' were worn at Easter; and, in

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That what you speak is in your conscience washed  
*As pure as sin with baptism.*

*K. Henry V.* Act i. Sc. 2.

And, in *Othello*, the villainous Iago is made to represent Desdemona's influence to be such, that it would be easy for her, if she wished—

To win the Moor—we're to renounce his baptism—  
*All seals and symbols of redeemed sin.*      Act ii. Sc. 3.

The judicious reader will be surprised—and not, I think, well pleased—to learn that Mr. Bowdler, in his ‘Family Shakspeare,’ has seen reason to omit the latter of these two lines.

And passing from the first scene of the Christian life to the last, from baptism to burial, we find, in *Cymbeline*, the *rationale* of interment with the head towards the east alluded to, and also the beautiful custom of strewing the grave with flowers described in language no less beautiful. The two brothers, Guiderius and Arviragus (Cadwal) are engaged in burying Fidele :—

*Guid.* Nay, Cadwal, we must lay his head to the east :  
My father hath a reason for't.      Act iv. Sc. 2.

The ‘reason’ could not properly have been, in the mouth of a Pagan, the Christian one; and therefore no further explanation is given :—

*Arvig.*                          With fairest flowers,  
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,  
I'll sweeten thy sad grave. Thou shalt not lack  
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose ; nor  
The azured hare-bell, like thy veins ; no, nor

The leaf of eglantine, *wbwm*\* not to slander,  
 Out-sweeten'd not thy breath : the ruddock † would,  
 With charitable bill, bring thee all this ;  
 Yea, and furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none,  
 To winter-ground thy corse. . . .

[*Re-enter Belarius.*]

*Bel.* Here's a few flowers ; but about midnight, more :  
 The herbs that have on them cold dew o' the night  
 Are strewings fitt'st for graves.

### SECT. 15. *Of Politics—Peace and War.*

We cannot conceive of Shakspeare otherwise than as a Conservative and a Royalist—if the anachronism involved in the use of both names may be pardoned. On the one hand, we are sure that he loved his country no less than the Prophets of old loved their chosen land, from the enthusiastic descriptions which he has given of it and its inhabitants :—

This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,  
 This fortress, built by Nature for herself,  
 This happy breed of men, this little world,  
 This precious stone, set in the silver sea,  
 Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
 This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land.

*King Richard II.* Act ii. Sc. 1.

Come the three corners of the world in arms,  
 And we shall shock them ! Nought shall make us rue  
 If England to itself do rest but true.

*King John,* Act v. Sc. 7.

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\* See above, p. 18.

† Redbreast.

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On the other hand, we may safely attribute to him a deep reverence for antiquity ; and we need not doubt that the precept of Solomon, ‘ My son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change,’ Prov. xxiv. 21, approved itself thoroughly to his large heart and marvellous understanding. How just is the sentiment which ascribes to ‘ Reverence,’ or due regard for subordination, *the power that keeps peace and order in the world*, to borrow the gloss of Johnson upon the words that follow !

Tho’ mean and mighty, rotting  
Together, have one dust ; yet *Reverence*  
(That ANGEL of the world) doth make distinction  
Of place ’tween high and low.

*Cymbeline*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

The same sentiment, in regard to the value and importance of *gradations* in human society, is enlarged upon and enforced, in *Troilus and Cressida*, most appropriately, by Ulysses :—

Oh, when *Degree* is shaken,  
*Which is the ladder to all high designs,*  
Then enterprise is sick. How could communities  
• • • • .  
The primogeniture, and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,  
But by *Degree* stand in authentic place ?  
Take but *Degree* away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows ; each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy. Act i. Sc. 3.

And where shall we find a more effective protest

against the spirit of innovation and continual change, or the value of antiquity and custom more truly estimated and described, than in what follows? A rash political movement is objected to—

As tho' the world were now but to begin,  
*Antiquity forgot, custom not known,*  
*The ratifiers and props of every word.*

*Hamlet, Act iv. Sc. 5.*

The critics have been somewhat puzzled by 'word,' as here used, and have proposed to alter it; Warburton suggesting 'ward,' Johnson 'weal,' and Tyrwhitt 'work.' Had any one of them read the Bible as attentively, and known it as well as Shakespeare did, I imagine he would have recognized the expression as borrowed, probably, from Scripture, where 'word' occurs not unfrequently as put

have taken more pleasure in depicting than those in which he satirizes mob-government; whether at Rome, as in *Coriolanus*, or at London, as in the *Second Part of King Henry VI.* (see, especially, Act iv. Sc. 2, where Jack Cade is introduced); in both which he teaches us by example, how

Headstrong liberty is lashed with woe.

*Comedy of Errors*, Act ii. Sc. 1.

Again: his moral estimate of a mere worldly politician, without faith in God, as *the Governor of the world*, may be gathered from an observation of Hamlet, in the grave-diggers' scene, where, when one of the clowns had thrown up a skull, he says—

This might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now overreaches, one that would circumvent God, might it not?

Act v. Sc. 1.

Surely not too bold a supposition, when we consider how statesmen have been known to act in defiance of God's laws.

I have already had occasion, much oftener than I could have wished, to invite my reader's attention to the manner in which omissions and even alterations of our poet's words have been made, in 'The Family Shakspeare.' But what will be thought of the strange obtuseness (for I can call it nothing less) which has changed the name of 'God' into the word 'anybody' in the foregoing quotation—a change by which the *ne plus ultra* of bathos is fathered upon Shakspeare, and the grand meaning

of the speaker that, however man may scheme and plot for the government of states, God Himself is the only true politician in the universe, is entirely lost !

No one who has not been present at a coronation, or who has not read *the authorised Coronation Service*, can form a just idea of the punctilious accuracy with which Shakspeare has described what took place at the crowning of Queen Anne Bullen, and was repeated, only with such additions as would be proper for a queen-regnant, on the crowning of our present most gracious sovereign Queen Victoria. I have before me a printed copy of *the Form and Order of the Service performed, and Ceremonies observed* on this latter occasion ; and when I have presented to the reader Shakspeare's description, as we find it in *King Henry VIII.*, I will make some extracts from the said formulary, which may serve to illustrate what our poet has written ; none of his critics, so far as I am aware, having said a word upon the matter, which is surely a most interesting one to every British subject. The place is Westminster Abbey :—

At length her Grace rose, and with modest paces  
Came to the altar : where she kneel'd, and saint-like,  
Cast her fair eyes to heaven, and prayed devoutly.  
Then rose again, and bowed her to the people ;  
When by the Archbishop of Canterbury  
She had *all the royal makings of a queen,*  
*As holy oil, Edward Confessor's crown,*



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*The rod, and bird of peace, and all such emblems,  
Laid nobly on her : which performed, the choir,  
With all the choicest music of the kingdom,  
Together sung Te Deum.*      Act iv. Sc. 1.

The authorised *Coronation Service* is divided into nineteen sections. A Rubric in the first section will partly explain the first three lines of the foregoing description :—

*The queen . . . having passed by her throne, makes her humble adoration, and then kneeling at the faldstool set for her before her chair, uses some short private prayers.*

The eighth section is entitled ‘THE ANOINTING,’ which follows immediately after the Queen has kissed ‘the Holy Gospel in the great Bible,’ and signed the Coronation ‘Oath.’ It is commenced with the hymn *Veni Creator.* Then follows a prayer by the Archbishop for the consecration of the oil, and for the blessing and sanctification of her who is to be anointed therewith. The unction is performed on *the crown of the head*, and on *the palms of both the hands*. It was made also *on the breast*, previously to the two last female coronations of Queen Adelaide and Queen Victoria. The putting on of ‘Edward Confessor’s CROWN’ does not come till the twelfth section, and meanwhile—besides ‘THE ROD’ (not to be confounded with the sceptre) ‘and BIRD OF PEACE,’ i. e. the Dove, which is delivered into the Queen’s left hand, with these words, by the Archbishop :—

Receive the rod of equity and mercy ; and God, from whom

all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, direct and assist you in the administration and exercise of all those powers which He hath given you:—

besides these — the other ‘emblems laid nobly on her’ are ‘THE SPURS AND SWORD,’ in Sect. ix.; ‘THE ROYAL ROBE, AND ORB’ with the cross above it, to signify ‘that the whole *world* is *subject* to the power and empire of Christ our Redeemer,’ in Sect. x.; ‘THE RING, the ensign of kingly dignity, and of defence of the Catholic Faith;’ and ‘THE ROYAL SCEPTRE, the ensign of kingly power and justice,’ in Sect. xi. After the crowning, comes first ‘THE PRESENTING\* OF THE HOLY BIBLE,’ in Sect. xiii.; and then the ‘TE DEUM,’ in Sect. xiv.; followed by ‘THE INTHRONIZATION.’ It is scarcely necessary to add that the Service is concluded with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, for which the Queen ‘offers’ the bread and wine.

It will have been noticed in the preceding extracts that the Coronation ‘Ring’ is described as ‘the ensign of kingly dignity, &c.;’ and before I pass on to other matters I am tempted to observe, in reference to that description, that the Rubric requires the Ring to be one ‘in which a *table jewel* is engraved,’ meaning, I suppose, a flat jewel capable of serving as a seal.† In that same play of King

\* The presenting of the Bible was omitted at the coronation of James II.! See Macaulay’s *History*, vol. ii. p. 49.

† Such rings, I imagine, were always signet rings; and the wear-



*Henry VIII.* we have the King's ring given to Cranmer, Act v. Sc. 1, and presented by him, Sc. 2, as a security against the machinations of Gardiner and others of the Council who were plotting to destroy him. It was anciently the custom for every monarch, as Mr. Reed remarks, to have a ring, the temporary possession of which invested the holder with the same authority as the owner himself could exercise; and not for every monarch only. In *King Richard II.* the Duke of York gives this order to his servant :—

Sirrah, get thee to Plashy, to my sister Gloster ;—

Bid her send me presently a thousand pound :

Hold, take my ring.

Act ii. Sc. 2.

There is a curious relic of the same custom still kept up in the ancient College of William of Wykeham at Winchester. When the captain of the school petitions the head master for a holiday—and obtains it—he receives from him a ring, in token of the indulgence granted, which he wears during the holiday, and returns to the head master when it is over. The inscription upon the ring was formerly ‘ Potentiam fero, geroque.’ It is now ‘ Commendat rarior\* usus.’

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ng of them is a custom of great antiquity. Compare Gen. xxxviii. 18, xli. 42; Esther iii. 10, 12, viii. 8; Jerom. xxii. 24; Daniel vi. 17.

\* From Juvenal, Sat. xi. 208.

‘ Voluptates commendat rarior usus.’

Our poet furnishes a parallel quotation, less concise indeed, but still more apposite :—

Imbued as the mind of our poet was with Scriptural principles, we shall not be surprised to find that he places upon the very highest ground both the prerogative and the responsibility of kings and governors. If, on the one hand, he would warn us that

Divinity doth hedge a king;     *Hamlet*, Act iv. Sc. 5.  
that

Kings are earth's gods;         *Pericles*, Act i. Sc. 1.

and 'deputies,' though 'unworthy,' of God himself, *King Henry VI., 2nd Part*, Act iii. Sc. 2;\* that the person of a king is 'the Lord's anointed temple,' *Macbeth*, Act ii. Sc. 3; and that 'The King's name is a tower of strength,' *King Richard III.* Act. v. Sc. 3, even as 'the name of the Lord is a strong tower,' Prov. xviii. 10:—on the other hand, he does not fail to teach that

He who the sword of Heaven will bear,  
Should be as holy as severe;—

*Measure for Measure*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

where we are reminded of S. Paul, Rom. xiii. 4, and II. Sam. xxiii. 3.

In like manner, if on the one hand he teaches that

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‘If all the year were playing holidays,  
To sport would be as tedious as to work;  
But when they seldom come, they wished for come.’

*K. Henry IV. 1st Part*, Act i. Sc. 2.

Compare the quotation from his 52nd sonnet, above, p. 22, 'the fine point of seldom pleasure.'

\* See also the speech of K. Richard II. quoted above, p. 107, and that of the Bishop of Carlisle, quoted p. 234.

There can be no security for usurped and illegitimate authority ;—

For though usurpers sway the rule awhile,  
Yet Heavens are just, and time suppresseth wrongs :—  
*King Henry VI. 3rd Part, Act iii. Sc. 3.*

on the other hand, he warns us that the loyalty and obedience which are due to lawful governors must be duly paid; for

Every subject's duty is the King's.

*King Henry V. Act vi. Sc. 1.*

That it is an unhappy thing for a country when its king is under age is a thought which might occur to many minds; but that the thought should be expressed in words so precisely parallel as those which I am about to quote could not have happened without actual contact of the mind of the one writer with the mind of the other :—

Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child.

*Ecclesiastes, x. 16.*

Woe to that land that's governed by a child.

*K. Richard III. Act. ii. Sc. 3.*

Among the countless marvels of Shakspeare's mind, it is not the least remarkable that he appears equally at home in regard to matters that must have been alien from his own experience and to those that came within it. For instance, whether he has to speak of the circumstances of land or sea, of peace or war, his sentiments and descriptions are equally just and valuable; although of the sea

he had probably seen little, and of war he could have known nothing from personal observation. It would be beyond my purpose to enter into this subject; and I shall content myself by a general reference on the one hand to *The Tempest*, and on the other to *King Henry V.* and *King Richard III.*

But there are two points connected with the mention of war which belong fairly to the design I have had in view, and upon which, therefore, I shall venture to add a few words. One is, that *war is a punishment sent by God*. So the Bible teaches, see Ezek. v. and xiv. 21. And so Shakspeare teaches, see *King Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 1.

War is His (God's) beadle;\* war is His vengeance.  
And again, see *King Henry VI. 2nd Part*, Act v. Sc. 2 :—

good.' See *King Henry V.* Act iv. Sc. 1. In further proof of this point, the reader may consult a sermon\* preached by Bishop Andrewes before Queen Elizabeth, at Richmond, in 1609, 'at what time the Earl of Essex was going forth upon the expedition for Ireland,' to quell the insurrection excited by the Earl of Tyrone—a sermon, therefore, which our poet might have heard; although, as I have said, we have no reason to suppose that he took part in that or any other warlike expedition.†

SECT. 16. *Of Death, the Intermediate State, and Day of Judgment.*

I have already had occasion, in Section 14, to anticipate the mention of the first subject which occurs to be spoken of in this place, viz., our poet's belief in the immortality of the soul, and consequently in a future state. But the passage which tells most directly upon the point remains still to be quoted. I allude to the dialogue in *Cymbeline*, between Posthumus and the Jailer; and the lesson which it teaches so emphatically, is the more remarkable, because it proceeds out of the mouth of a Heathen:—

*Jailer.* Come, sir, are you ready for death?

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\* Bp. Andrewes' Works, vol. i. pp. 321–337.

† He was, however, enrolled as a soldier in 1605, after the Gunpowder Plot. See Mr. Dyce's *Life*, p. 91.



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*Posthumus.* Ready long ago. . . . I am merrier to die than thou art to live.

*Jail.* Indeed, sir, he that sleeps, feels not the toothache : but a man that were to *sleep your sleep*, and a hangman to help him to bed, I think he would change places with his officer ; for look you, sir, *you know not which way you shall go.*

*Postb.* Yes, indeed do I, fellow.

*Jail.* Your death has eyes in's head then ; I have not seen him so pictured. You must either be directed by some who take upon them to know ; or take upon yourself that which, I am sure, you do not know ; or jump\* the after-enquiry on your own peril : and how you shall speed in your journey's end, I think, you'll never return to tell one.

*Postb.* I tell thee, fellow, *there are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going*, but such as *wink, and will not use them.*

Act v. Sc. 4.

And if this be true in a Heathen's mouth, how much more in a Christian's !

In the famous soliloquy of Hamlet, 'To be, or not to be,' when he comes to speak (as the Jailer has spoken above) of

The undiscovered country from whose bourn

No traveller returns,

Act iii. Sc. 1.

Mr. Douce suspects, not without reason, that Job x. 21, was present to our poet's mind :—

I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death.

And here let me introduce an observation which has occurred, I doubt not, to the minds of many

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\* i. e. venture at it without thought. So in *Macbeth*;

I'd *jump* the life to come. Act i. Sc. 7.



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of my readers in the course of this and the preceding chapter.

There can be little doubt that our forefathers, in and before Shakspeare's time, and even Shakspeare himself, derived, not altogether unprofitably, some portion of their knowledge of Holy Scripture from the exhibitions of religious plays, called miracles, or mysteries ; and consequently that much which would strike us now-a-days as irreverent, or at best of questionable propriety, when spoken upon the stage, did not appear to them in the same light. I imagine that when Justice Shallow observed to Silence, his brother justice,

Death, as the *Psalmist\** saith, is certain to all; all shall die ;—  
*King Henry IV. 2nd Part, Act iii. Sc. 2.*

neither the author nor the actor would be conscious of any irreverence in thus introducing the Psalmist's name ; but times are changed, and Mr. Bowdler, by omitting the clause printed in italics, gives us to understand that now it 'cannot with propriety be read' even 'in a family !'

Together with the certainty of death, the Psalmist also teaches us that the rich man 'shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him ;' xlix. 17. And the Apostle, that 'As we brought nothing into this world, so it is certain we can carry nothing out ;' 1 Tim. vi. 7.

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\* See Psalm xc. 10. In Psalm xxii. 15, 'dust of death' may be compared with 'dusty death' in *Macbeth*, Act v. Sc. 5.

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Their words require no confirmation ; and yet the great Earl of Warwick is well chosen to speak as follows when he comes to die :—

Lo, now my glory smeared in dust and blood !  
My parks, my walks, my manors that I had,  
Even now forsake me, and of all my lands  
Is nothing left me but my body's length ! \*  
Why, what is *pomp*, rule, reign, but earth and dust ?  
And live we how we can, yet *die we must*.

*K. Henry VI. 3rd Part, Act v. Sc. 2.*

The Lord Talbot, speaking of the death of ‘the noble Duke of Bedford,’ tells the same truism, with the addition of a melancholy sentiment, to which most of us, sooner or later, will be inclined to respond :—

Kings and mightiest potentates must die,  
For that’s the end of human misery.

*K. Henry VI. 1st Part, Act iii. Sc. 2.*

We find both the truism and sentiment (which our poet is fond of introducing where he has occasion to mention death) repeated at greater length in the Dirge over Fidele, sung by Guiderius and Arviragus :—

*Qui.* Fear no more the heat † o’ the sun,  
Nor the furious winter’s rages ;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
*Home art gone*, and ta’en thy wages :

\* A frequent sentiment in the Greek tragedians, repeated by Shakspeare in *King John*, Act iv. Sc. 2, in *King Richard II.* Act iii. Sc. 2, and in *King Henry IV. 1st Part*, Act v. Sc. 4.

† See *Revel. vii. 16.*

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Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

*Arc.* Fear no more the frown o' the great,  
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke ;  
Care no more to clothe, and eat ;  
To thee the reed is as the oak :  
The sceptre, learning, physic, must  
All follow this, and come to dust.

*Cymbeline*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

But these were heathens. In the case of Christians, our poet fails not to introduce a touch of holier consolation :—

*Cbief Justice.* How doth the king ?

*Warwick.* Exceeding well ; his cares are now all ended.

*Cbief Justice.* I hope not dead ?

*Warwick.* He's walk'd the way of nature ;

And, to our purposes, he lives no more.

*K. Henry IV. 2nd Part*, Act v. Sc. 2.

As much as to imply, not however to *his own purposes*, now that his true and immortal life has begun. So, too, in *Winter's Tale*, Dion says, with reference to the supposed death of Hermione, wife of King Leontes :—

What were more holy

Than to rejoice, the former queen is well ? *Act v. Sc. 1.*

This happy notion and expression of our poet that it is 'well'—'exceeding well'—with the departed, was perhaps\* derived from the reply which

\* Since the above was written, I find that Mr. Henley has made the same conjecture. The phrase in question, as applicable to the dead, occurs also in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act ii. Sc. 5 ; and twice in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act iv. Sc. 4, and Act v. Sc. 1.

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the good Shunamite gave to the Prophet Elisha,  
when he asked her,—

Is it well with the child? And she answered, *it is well—*  
*2 Kings iv. 26.*

though the child was dead.

But, in order that it may be really ‘well’ with us when we come to die, Shakspeare will also tell us—no man better—what is the one thing needful. And with what a lightning flash of condensed thought and language does he teach the lesson!—

Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither:  
*Ripeness is all:* come on. *King Lear,* Act v. Sc. 2.

‘Ripeness,’ i. e. to be prepared to die, at the appointed time. As Hamlet expresses the same idea:—

If it (death) be not now, yet it will come: *the readiness is all.*  
Act v. Sc. 2.

And what minister of the gospel ever discoursed more justly of the value of such preparation\* than does, in Shakspeare’s words, King Henry V., when, passing through the camp in disguise, before the battle of Agincourt, he holds discourse with Williams, one of the common soldiers of his army?—

Every soldier in the wars should do as every sick man in his bed—*wash every mote out of his conscience;* and dying so, death

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\* It will not be out of place to mention here that our poet made his will only one month before his death, ‘in perfect health and memory, God be praised!—when both his daughters were married and settled in life; the younger only six weeks before the death of her father.

is to him advantage :\* or not dying, the time was blessedly lost wherein such preparation was gained. And in him that escapes, it were not sin to think, that making God so free an offer, He let him outlive that day to see His greatness, and *to teach others how they should prepare.*      Act iv. Sc. 1.

The same all-important truth is urged again in *King Richard III.* Act iii. Sc. 3 :—

"T is a vile thing to die  
When men are *unprepared* and look not for it.

And now—if we wish to see (as far as can be seen in this world) an example of this truth in the end of one, haughty and ambitious, who was neither *ripe* nor *ready*—what sermon is to be compared to the representation which our poet gives of the death of Cardinal Beaufort, in the *Second Part of King Henry VI.*; its effect being heightened by the charity of the king in declining to judge, and in proposing to turn it to the edification of the survivors! I give the scene entire—for, as with the Scripture itself (if the comparison may be made without irreverence), it would be wrong to take anything from it, or to add anything to it. Johnson has truly observed, ‘the beauties of it are such that the superficial reader cannot miss them, and the profound can imagine nothing beyond them.’

SCENE.—*Cardinal Beaufort's bedchamber.*

Enter K. HENRY, SALISBURY, WARWICK, &c. *The Cardinal in bed.*

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\* To die is gain.—Phil. i. 2.



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*K. Hen.* How fares my lord? speak, Beaufort, to thy sovereign.

*Car.* If thou be'st Death, I'll give thee England's treasure,  
Enough to purchase such another island,  
So thou wilt let me live, and feel no pain.

*K. Hen.* Ah, what a sign it is of evil life,  
Where death's approach is seen so terrible!

*War.* Beaufort, it is thy sovereign speaks to thee.

*Car.* Bring me unto my trial when you will.  
Died he\* not in his bed? where should he die?  
Can I make men live, whe'r they will or no?—  
O! torture me no more, I will confess.—  
Alive again? then show me where he is;  
I'll give a thousand pound to look upon him.—  
He hath no eyes, the dust hath blinded them.—  
Comb down his hair; look! look! it stands upright,  
Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul!  
Give me some drink; and bid the apothecary  
Bring the strong poison that I bought of him.

*K. Hen.* O thou eternal Mover of the heavens,  
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!  
O, beat away the busy meddling fiend,  
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,  
And from his bosom purge this black despair!

*War.* See, how the pangs of death do make him grin.

*Sal.* Disturb him not, let him pass peaceably.

*K. Hen.* Peace to his soul, if God's good pleasure be!  
Lord cardinal, if thou think'st on heaven's bliss,  
Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.  
He dies, and makes no sign; O God, forgive him!

*War.* So bad a death argues a monstrous life.

*K. Hen.* Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all.  
Close up his eyes, and draw the curtain close;  
And let us all to meditation.

*K. Henry VI. 2nd Part, Act iii. Sc. 3.*

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\* Humphrey, Duke of Gloster, murdered by Beaufort's order.

With this harrowing picture it will be some relief to compare the death-bed of another Cardinal, also the victim of inordinate ambition,\* but partly, too, of the fickleness of royal favour—I mean Cardinal Wolsey. It is Queen Katharine who asks :—

*Katb.* Pr'ythee, good Griffith, tell me how he died :  
If well, he stepp'd before me, happily,  
For my example.

*Grif.* Well, the voice goes, madam :  
For after the stout earl Northumberland  
Arrested him at York, and brought him forward  
(As a man sorely tainted) to his answer,  
He fell sick suddenly, and grew so ill,  
He could not sit his mule.

*Katb.* Alas ! poor man !  
*Grif.* At last, with easy† roads, he came to Leicester,  
Lodg'd in the abbey ; where the reverend abbot,  
With all his convent, honourably receiv'd him ;  
To whom he gave these words,—*O, fatber abbot,*  
*An old man, broken with the storms of state,*  
*Is come to lay bis weary bones among ye ;*  
*Give him a little earth for charity !*  
So went to bed : where eagerly his sickness  
Pursued him still ; and, three nights after this,  
About the hour of eight (which he himself  
Foretold should be his last), full of repentance,  
Continual meditations, tears, and sorrows,  
He gave his honours to the world again,  
His blessed part to heaven, and slept in peace.

*Katb.* So may he rest ; his faults lie gently on him !  
Griffith afterwards adds :—

His overthrow heap'd happiness upon him ;

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\* The death-bed scene of a sensualist, as exhibited in the case of Falstaff, has been alluded to above. See p. 226.      † i. e. stages.

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For then, and not till then, he felt himself,  
And found the blessedness of being little:  
And, to add greater honours to his age  
Than man could give him, *be died fearing God.*  
*King Henry VIII. Act iv. Sc. 2.*

Our Lord bids us 'not to be afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do,' Luke xii. 4, comp. Matt. x. 28. In like manner the Lady Anne, with reference to the death of her father-in-law, King Henry VI., reminds the wicked Gloster :—

Thou hadst but power over his mortal body ;  
His soul thou canst not have.

King Richard III. Act i. Sc. 2.

And whereas the Royal Preacher teaches us in the book of Ecclesiastes, that, when we come to die,

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it;— xii. 7.

Shakspeare has made one of our English kings to expire with these words upon his lips:—

Mount, mount my soul! thy seat is up on high;  
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward here to die.

*King Richard II.* Act v. Sc. 5.

The place to which the spirits of good men are admitted immediately upon their dissolution is twice mentioned by our poet\* under the figure by which

\* There is also a reference to our Lord's promise to the penitent thief, in *K. Henry VI. 2nd Part*, Act v. Sc. 1. See below, Conclusion.



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we find it represented in the New Testament; see Luke xvi. 23.

*Bolingbroke.* Why, bishop, is Norfolk dead?

*Carlisle.* As sure as I live, my lord.

*Boling.* Sweet peace conduct his sweet soul to the bosom  
Of good old Abramam! *K. Richard II.* Act iv. Sc. 1.

*K. Ricb.* The sons of Edward sleep in Abramam's bosom.

*K. Ricbard III.* Act iv. Sc. 4.

On the other hand, the torment of bad men after death, as represented in the case of the rich man in the same parable, is twice alluded to in *King Henry IV.* viz. in *1st Part*, Act iii. Sc. 3; *2nd Part*, Act i. Sc. 2; and on both occasions the allusion is put into the mouth of Falstaff, who handles it, as might be expected, with such characteristic levity, that in these instances I cannot complain of Mr. Bowdler for omitting it, as he has done. There is also made by Falstaff a reference to Lazarus in that play, *1st Part*, Act iv. Sc. 2, which is partly dealt with by Mr. Bowdler in the same way. This likewise may be justified. On the other hand, two other passages of a similar character, and bearing upon the same point, are not to be found in 'the Family Shakespeare,' the omission of which is, I think, to be regretted. One is the speech of the Clown in *All's well, &c.*, Act iv. Sc. 5:—

I am for the house with the narrow gate, which I take to be too little for pomp to enter; some that humble themselves may; but the many will be too chill and tender; and they'll be for the flowery way, that leads to the broad gate, and the great fire.

The other is spoken by the porter at Macbeth's castle :—

I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go  
*the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.*

*Macbeth*, Act ii. Sc. 3.

Warburton characterises the former passage as 'impious trash.' Steevens condemns both 'as impious stuff.' For my own part, as I do not doubt they were written with earnestness, and with a wonderful knowledge of human nature—the latter passage, especially, as put into the mouth of a drunken man—so I believe they may be read with edification.

With regard to the condition and circumstances of the departed in the intermediate state, we have no Scriptural authority for concluding that they are *not* conscious of what is passing here. Our poet therefore has not exceeded the bounds which the Anglican Church allows to the *pious opinions* of her members, when, at the conclusion of *King Henry VIII.*, he makes the King to say, on the occasion of the christening of his infant daughter—afterwards Queen Elizabeth :—

When I am in heaven, I shall desire  
To see what this child does, and praise my Maker..

Act v. Sc. 4.

Still less can we object to that which is put into the mouth of the Lady Constance, in *King John*,\* to

\* This play was written, according to Mr. Malone, in 1596—the year in which Shakspeare lost his only son, Hamnet (see above, p. 199); or, according to Mr. Chalmers, in 1598. I have supposed

the effect that the recognition of those whom we have known and loved in this world will be among the causes of our happiness in the world to come. Addressing Pandulph, the Pope's legate, she says :—

Father cardinal, I have heard you say  
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven :  
If that be true, I shall see my boy again. Act iii. Sc. 4.

Most strange, indeed, would it be, if we Christians might not entertain the hope which was the earnest expectation, the comfort, and the joy of the great and good among the heathen ! ‘ Equidem,’ says Cato to Scipio and Lælius, in the *De Senectute* of Cicero, ‘ Equidem efferor studio patres vestros, quos colui et dilexi, videndi,’ i. e. after death. And he proceeds in this noble strain : ‘ O ! præclarum diem, quum ad illum divinum animorum concilium cœtumque proficiscar, quumque ex hac turbâ et colluvione discedam ! ’ And then, like Constance, he thinks of seeing again the son whom he had lost. ‘ Proficiscar enim non ad eos solum viros, de quibus ante dixi, verum etiam *ad Catonem meum* ;’ whom he goes on to praise, as she has praised Arthur. So much is there of the same truth and nature where great minds, no matter how different their respective circumstances, are led to speak upon the same subjects !

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that Shakspeare was mindful of his own loss in putting the language quoted above, and other lines of the same play, into the mouth of Constance. See *Sermon preached at Stratford*, p. 20, sq.

300 *Shakspeare's Religious Principles and*

Nor is it on one occasion only that Shakspeare introduces that sentiment, so full, not only of affection, but of faith and hope. When Le Beau, in *As you like it*, recommends Orlando to withdraw from the court of the usurping Duke, he thus bids him farewell :—

Sir, fare ye well ;  
Hereafter, *in a better world than this,*  
I shall desire more love and knowledge of you.

Act i. Sc. 2.

So again, in *King Richard III.*, when Lord Rivers is being led to execution, he thus addresses Lord Richard Gray and Sir Thomas Vaughan, who were to suffer with him :—

Come, Gray ; come, Vaughan ; let us all embrace—  
Farewell, until we meet again in heaven.

Act iii. Sc. 3.

Notwithstanding the natural intensity of his own feelings, and the depth of affection for which we must give him credit, our poet does not fail to uphold the moderation which the Bible prescribes, in mourning for our departed friends. While of all such sorrow he teaches us not to be insensible, or to allow ourselves to forget the objects of it—

I must feel it as a man ;  
I cannot but remember such things were,  
That were most precious to me ;—

*Macbeth*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

he would also warn us against excessive grief :—

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*Some grief shows much of love,  
But much of grief shows still some want of wit.*  
*Romeo and Juliet*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

Compare Ecclesiasticus xxii. 11.

But we pass on to still more solemn truths, fully certified to the Christian only, through the Revelation he has received. We know that after the intermediate state, and before the final and complete reward of God's true servants, will come the Judgment; and we also know that that judgment will differ from the trials which take place in this world, in two respects: 1st. It will be incorruptibly and infallibly just; and 2nd. The accused will be made to give evidence against themselves.

*In the corrupted currents of this world,  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice ;  
But 'tis not so above.  
There is no shuffling : there the action lies  
In his\* true nature ; and we ourselves compelled,  
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
To give in evidence.* *Hamlet*, Act iii. Sc. 3.

It is not a little remarkable that Shakspeare should have seized upon this latter point. He is supported in the view he takes by Bishop Pearson.† That great divine, expounding the seventh article of the Creed, thus writes, in an argument upon conscience:—

It followeth that this conscience is not so much a judge as a

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\* See above, p. 16.

† Born, 1612; died, 1686.

witness,\* bound over to give testimony, for or against us, at some judgment after this life to pass upon us.

And he refers to S. Paul, Rom. ii. 14-16.

But even if this were not so, we are assured that 'we must all appear,' or rather *be made manifest* (*φαν·ρωθῆναι*) 'before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body,' 2 Cor. v. 10. Accordingly, when Hubert shows to King John the warrant which the latter had given him for the murder of Prince Arthur, the King exclaims:—

Oh, when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth  
Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal  
Witness against us to damnation.

*King John*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

It was to be expected that the circumstances of the judgment day, as they are revealed to us in Scripture, would make a deep and lasting impression upon a mind like Shakspeare's. Accordingly, when he desires to give more than ordinary effect to deep passion, to indignation and abhorrence at crime committed, or to affliction and distress at calamity incurred, he has recourse to images which are associated with the final doom—the sounding of the last trump, the discomfiture of creation, the dissolution of the heavens and the earth. Thus, first, in the con-

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\* Juvenal, though a heathen, expresses the same truth (and so confirms S. Paul), where he says that wicked men—

'Nocte, dieque suum gestare in pectore *testem*.'—Sat. xiii. 198.

*Sentiments derived from the Bible.* 303

cluding scene of *King Lear*, where the fact that the personages of the play are all Pagans, would not allow of more than a general and indistinct allusion to 'the promised end,' we read as follows :—

*Enter LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms.*

*Lear.* Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones :  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That heaven's vault should crack.

*Kent.* Is this the promis'd end?

*Edgar.* Or image of that horror?      Act v. Sc. 3.

See Matt. xxiv. 6, 'The end is not yet ;' and  
1 Pet. iv. 7, 'The end of all things is at hand.'

There is the same kind of indistinct reference to the gospel record of our Lord's combined prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the end of the world, in a speech of Gloster's, towards the beginning of the same play :—

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us : . . . love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide : in cities, mutinies ; in countries, discord ; in palaces, treason ; and the bond cracked between father and son. This villain of mine comes under the prediction ; there's son against father : the king falls from bias of nature ; there's father against child. Act i. Sc. 2.

In answer to the objection that such references are out of place in the mouth of Pagans, it is to be remembered that the heathen had their Sibylline verses and prophetic books, and that both Lucan and Ovid foretell of prodigies, and of the conflagration of the world, at the last day.



In *Macbeth* we advance a step farther towards a fuller exhibition of the same comparison, when Macduff enters, and discovers the dead bodies of King Duncan and his attendants, all murdered:—

*Macduff.* O horror ! horror ! horror !  
Tongue, nor heart, cannot conceive, nor name thee !

Murder ! and treason !  
Banquo, and Donalbain ! Malcolm ! awake !  
Shake off this drowsy sleep, death's counterfeit,  
And look on death itself ! Up, up, and see  
*The great doom's image !*—Malcolm ! Banquo !  
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,  
To countenance this horror !

*Enter LADY MACBETH.*

*Lady M.* What's the business,  
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley  
The sleepers of the house ?                           Act ii. Sc. 3.

Again the same image is invoked to give expression to other but no less violent and absorbing emotions, in *Romeo and Juliet* :—

*Juliet.* Is Romeo slaughtered, and is Tybalt dead?  
My dear-loved cousin, and my dearer lord?  
Then, *dreadful trumpet, sound the general doom!*

Act iii. Sc. 2

When the young Lord Clifford, in the *Second Part of King Henry VI.*, sees, after the battle of St. Albans, the hopes of his party blasted, and his father killed, he exclaims :—

O ! let the vile world end  
And the premised\* flames of the last day

- i.e. Sent before their time

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*Knit earth and heaven together !  
Now let the general trumpet blow his blast,  
Particularities and petty sounds  
To cease !\**

Act v. Sc. 2.

The incestuous marriage of the queen, in *Hamlet*, with the murderer of her husband and his own brother, might well seem to call forth from the young prince the utmost abhorrence which words can express :—

*Heaven's face doth glow :  
Yea, this solidity and compound mass  
With tristful visage, as against† the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act. Hamlet, Act iii. Sc. 4.*

I see nothing in this last passage to justify the doubts and objections which Warburton and other critics have raised. I imagine that *the glowing of Heaven's face* is to be understood to imply *shame* at the Queen's act. Mr. Malone timidly asks— ‘Had not our poet S. Luke's description of the last day in his thoughts?’ No doubt, he had; but why not also the parallel descriptions of S. Matthew and S. Mark? Yes, and still more, of S. Peter, 2 Ep. iii. 7–11; and S. John, Rev. xx. 11. The truth is, I fear, that whatever else our poet's critics have been strong in, they have, for the most part, not† been strong in knowledge

<sup>1</sup> \* To stop.

† See above, p. 23.

† I speak of the critics in the Variorum edition. Among these Mr. Henley is, I think, the only one who deserves to be exempted from the above censure.



of the Scriptures; and that the book which they should have looked to first and most for help in the illustration of his works, is the book which has been generally looked to last and least.

That the passage of S. Peter just referred to had attracted his attention is evident from a speech of Prospero in the *Tempest* :—

Act iv. Sc. i

Compare also Isaiah li. 6, 'The heavens shall vanish away like smoke,' &c.

And now the curtain of our great teacher drops, as it ought, before the happiness of Heaven. We know, though imperfectly, what we now are; we know not, even with the help of Revelation, what we shall be hereafter:—

Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.      1 John iii. 2.

Ophelia has caught this up in her touching way, where she says to the King, in *Hamlet* :—

\* i. e. A vapour. But, notwithstanding the elaborate argument of Horne Tooke, I confess I should prefer to read *track*, supported as it is by the parallel in *Timon of Athens*, Act i. Sc. 1.

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Well, God 'ield\* you! They say, the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but *know not what we may be*. God be at your table! Act iv. Sc. 5.

We can have no doubt that the last of these expressions (which, by-the-bye, Mr. Bowdler has omitted) is to be understood as a deranged person's version of 'May you be at God's table,' according to the Scriptural notion,† which represents the happiness of heaven under the figure of a feast, with God for our host. See Matt. viii. 11, Luke xii. 37. There can be no doubt, too, that the preceding clause in Ophelia's speech is taken from the latter clause of S. John's text. What if the eccentricity of thought, natural to mad people, should have converted—in the presence of the wicked king—the Christian's *sonship to God*, with which the apostle's text begins, into the owl's *daughtership to the baker*, which Ophelia first introduces? I am inclined to think this not impossible, more especially as the legend referred to is a Christian one, in which, according to Mr. Steevens, our Saviour being refused *bread* by the daughter of a baker (which again would suggest the notion of the *blessedness of him that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, Luke xiv. 15) is described as punishing her by

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\* Yield, i. e. reward you.

† And classical also. Compare Virg. Ecl. iv. 62 :

‘Cui non risere Parentes,  
Nec Deus *hunc mensā*, Dea nec dignata cubili est.’

See also Hor. iv. Od. viii. 29, and elsewhere.



turning her into an owl. Mr. Douce has given the story more at length, and represents it as still current among the common people in Gloucestershire.

But though 'it doth not yet appear what we shall be' in heaven, we know that comfort and happiness are to be looked for *there*, and *only there*. When the Queen, in *King Richard II.*, says to the Duke of York,

For Heaven's sake, speak comfortable words;

he replies in language which many passages of the Bible fully justify:—

Should I do so, I should belie my thoughts ;  
*Comfort's in heaven* : and we are on the earth,  
Where nothing *lives* but crosses, care, and grief.

Act ii. Sc. 2.

And yet we must not be impatient to quit this scene of trial, so long as our remaining here may tend in any way to promote God's glory, or to be serviceable to our fellow men. Shakspeare, from the mouth of Hamlet, will teach us this, after the measure of the wisdom and the love of this world; but we must go to the Bible, and sit at the feet of S. Paul, if we would learn it more perfectly. The Prince of Denmark, on the point of death, speaks to his friend Horatio:—

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in  
To tell my story.

The great apostle of the Gentiles, in bondage at Rome, writes to his Philippian converts :—

I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better : Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. *Phil. i. 23, 24.*

Meanwhile may our ‘names be written *in the Book of Life!*’ This expression, which is used frequently by S. John in the Revelation, and once by S. Paul, *Phil. iv. 3*, could only have occurred to one who had often in his hand the sacred volume, which is *to us in this world* ‘the Book of Life.’ We find it in *King Richard II.* The speaker is Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk :—

No, Bolingbroke ; if ever I were traitor,  
My name be blotted from the *Book of Life*,  
And I from heaven banished, as from hence !

*Act i. Sc. 3.*

But in order that our names may be written in that book, let it be remembered, ONE THING IS NEEDFUL. ‘Philosophy’ may suffice to tell us

Of happiness  
By virtue specially to be achieved ;

*Taming of Shrew, Act i. Sc. 1.*

but if our ‘virtue’ is indeed to be

Led on by heaven, and crowned with joy at last,

*Pericles, Prince of Tyre, Act v. Sc. 3.*

it must be learnt in the school of HIM ‘Who hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel,’ and Whose is the only ‘Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.’



### CHAPTER III.

*Of the Poetry of Shakspeare as derived from  
the Bible.*



COME now, in the last place, to speak of passages in which Shakspeare has been indebted to Holy Writ, not only for poetical diction and sentiment, but for some of the most striking and sublime images which are to be found in his works.

1. We are familiar with that simple, but most affecting apostrophe with which the vision of Isaiah opens :—

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken—I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.

i. 2.

See also Deut. xxxii. 1, Jerem. ii. 12, vi. 19. All creation is summoned to listen to a tale of undutifulness, which was felt by the prophets to be without parallel. It was under the influence of a similar feeling that Hamlet exclaims upon his mother's hasty and incestuous marriage with his uncle, his father's murderer :—

*Heaven and earth!*

Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him,

As if increase of appetite had grown  
By what it fed on : and yet within a month—  
Let me not think on't.      *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 2.

And again the same feeling is aroused and vents itself in a similar exclamation, in the scene between Hamlet and his father's ghost :—

*Ghost.*                          List, list, O list,  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love.  
*Hamlet.* O ! Heaven !  
*Ghost.* Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.  
    *Ibid.* Sc. 5.

The exclamation is not idle or common-place, but sublime and full of intense passion.\*

2. It is a bolder flight of imagination which represents the elements and heavenly bodies taking part, as allies, in the conflict of human warfare. Thus, in that grandest of all lyrical compositions—the song of Deborah and Barak, Judges v. 20 :—

They fought from heaven ; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

Compare Joshua x. 12–14. The classical student will be reminded of a well-known parallel passage in the poet Claudian, *De tert. Consul. Honor.* 93–98 :—

Te propter, gelidis Aquilo de monte procellis  
Obruit adversas acies, revolutaque tela

\* The objection taken by some critics to the foregoing examples, as inconclusive and too trivial to deserve notice, may perhaps be diminished in some degree by the consideration that they are intended to be read not only in immediate connexion with, but as introductory to, those which follow in the next section. And does not the view suggested add dignity to the passages themselves ?

Vertit in auctores, et turbine reppulit hastas.  
O nimium dilecte Deo ! cui fundit ab antris  
Cœlus armatas hyemes ; cui militat æther,  
*Et conjurati veniant ad classica venti.*

Claudian was a heathen ; but he recognised what was believed to be the interposition of the Deity on behalf of the Emperor Theodosius against Eugenius, at the battle of Aquileia, fought on September 6th, A.D. 394. See Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, lib. v. cap. xxvi.

Let us now see the use which our poet has made of this sublime idea.

First, in *King Henry VI. 3rd Part*, it appears in its simplest and, so to speak, most elementary form, where Hastings says :—

"Tis better using France, than trusting France :  
Let us be backed with Heaven, and with the seas,  
Which God hath given for fence impregnable,  
And with their helps only defend ourselves :  
In them and in ourselves our safety lies :—

Act iv. Sc. i.

a passage upon which Dr. Johnson remarks,

This has been the advice of every man who in any age understood and favoured the interest of England.

Next, in *King Richard II.*, we have a development of the idea, suggested probably by the destruction of the host of Sennacherib, recorded in 2 Kings xix. and Isaiah xxxvii. :—

*K. Richard.* And we are barren, and bereft of friends ;  
Yet know—my master, God omnipotent,  
*Is mustering in his clouds*, on our behalf,

*Armies of pestilence*: and they shall strike  
Your children yet unborn, and unbegot,  
That lift your vassal hands against my head,  
And threaten the glory of my precious crown. Act iii. Sc. 3.

In like manner, the Lady Constance, in *King John*, on behalf of her son Arthur, with the fury of a Pythian prophetess enthroned upon her sacred tripod, cries out:—

Once more, the aged King Lear, upon the sight of his unnatural daughter, Goneril, thus invokes the armed confederacy of heaven on his side against her:

*K. Lear.* Who comes here?—O heavens,  
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
Allow\* obedience, if yourselves are old,  
Make it your cause; send down and take my part.  
*King Lear*, Act ii. Sc. 4.

See also 'I tax not you,' &c., in Act iii. Sc. 2.

3. To pass on from this mustering of elements of warfare to the incidents of war itself. In that most poetical of all the Books of Scripture, the Book of Job, the passage which describes the war-horse, ch. xxxix. 19-25, has ever been considered as one of the most sublime—superior even to the famous parallel of Virgil:—

Tum, si qua sonum procul arma dedere,

\* See above, p. 30.

*Stare loco nescit, micat auribus, et tremit artus,  
Collectumque premens volvit sub naribus ignem.*

*Georg. iii. 83-85.*

The expression of the inspired writer which appears to have struck the fancy of our poet most is this :—

He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage.

Thus in *King Henry IV. 2nd Part*, we read :—

With that, he gave his able horse the head,  
And, bending forward, struck his armed heels  
Against the panting sides of his poor jade  
Up to the rowel-head ; and starting so,  
He seemed in running to devour the way,  
Staying no longer question.

Act i. Sc. 1.

And afterwards, in *Hamlet*, we find the same image very appropriately introduced in the mouth of a Danish gentleman, to describe an occurrence to which the flat sea-board of that country would be liable, though not so frequently or so destructively perhaps as the coast of Holland :

Gent. (To the king.) Save yourself, my lord,  
The ocean, overpeering of his list,\*  
*Eats not the flats* with more impetuous haste  
Than young Laertes, in a riotous haste,  
O'erbears your officers.

Act iv. Sc. 5.

4. The transformation of weapons of war into implements of peace is a favourite image with the inspired prophets. Thus, *Isaiah ii. 4*, and *Micah iv. 3*:

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.

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\* i. e. bounds.

We see the contrary transformation in the Prophet Joel, where, in a vein of irony, he challenges the heathens to make their utmost efforts in opposition to God's truth ; iii. 9, 10 :—

Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles : Prepare war ; wake up the mighty men : let all the men of war draw near ; let them come up :

Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears : let the weak say, I am strong.

A transformation which Virgil describes as actually taking place in the melancholy picture which he draws of the universal disorders caused throughout the world by the civil wars of Rome :—

Tot bella per orbem ;

Tam multæ scelerum facies : non ullus aratro  
Dignus honos ; squalent abductis arva colonis :  
Et curvæ rigidum falces conflantur in ensem.

*Georg. i. 505-508.*

Our poet has given an original turn to the same idea, by applying it to women. I allude to the words of Philip Faulconbridge, in *King John*, where he represents the female part of the population as ready to rise, or rather as already risen, in the king's behalf :—

Ladies, and pale-visaged maids,  
Like Amazons, come tripping after drums ;  
Their thimbles into armed gauntlets change,  
Their needles to lances, and their gentle hearts  
To fierce and bloody inclination.      Act v. Sc. 2.

5. Another image of warfare which occurs more than once in the poetical portions of the Bible is

that which describes the weapons of war, arrows and the sword, when used to execute God's vengeance, as 'drunk with blood.' See the Song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 42, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah xlvi. 10. Shakspeare has profited by this in the words which he puts into the mouth of the Earl of Warwick, when Richard Plantagenet had told him of his brother's death :—

*Ricb.* Thy brother's blood the thirsty earth hath drunk.  
*Warw.* Then let the earth be drunken with our blood.

*K. Henry VI. 3rd Part, Act ii. Sc. 3.*

The same idea will be familiar to the reader of the Greek tragedians; who, possibly, may have derived it from the Mosaical account of the first murder, where the Lord is introduced as speaking to Cain :—

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath *opened her mouth* to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

*Genesis iv. 2.\**

6. From passages such as these it is a slight transition or advance in metaphor which ascribes feelings of sympathy to inanimate things, and especially when things animate have come short in that duty. We can all appreciate the strict human propriety, as well as the poetry of the language which our Lord made use of when the Pharisees appealed to him to rebuke His Disciples for the

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\* Comp. Revel. xvii. 6.

acclamations which they raised upon his last entry into Jerusalem :—

He answered and said unto them, I tell you, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Luke xix. 40.

He spoke not without reference probably to the similar rebuke which the prophet Habakkuk announces would be forthcoming against the disobedience of the rich, who had exalted themselves and their dwelling places, through covetousness, through violence, and injustice :—

The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

ii. 11.

This notion of the brute earth, with its products, senseless and irrational, exhibiting, or, in the poet's imagination, not unwilling to exhibit greater powers of sympathy than are to be found among men, has afforded matter for several of Shakspeare's most effective passages. For example, when King Richard II. returned from Ireland, to meet, and, if possible, suppress the insurrection of Bolingbroke, afterwards King Henry IV., he thus apostrophises the coast of Wales, upon which he landed :—

I weep for joy,  
To stand upon my kingdom once again.—  
Dear earth, I do salute thee with mine hand,  
Tho' rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs :

Feed not thy sovereign's foe, my gentle earth,  
Nor with thy sweets comfort his ravenous sense ;

But let thy spiders, that suck up thy venom,  
And heavy gaited toads, lie in their way.

Yield stinging nettles to mine enemies :  
And when they from thy bosom pluck a flower,  
Guard it, I pray thee, with a lurking adder ;  
Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch  
Throw death upon thy sovereign's enemies.—  
Mock not my senseless conjuration, lords ;  
*This earth shall have a feeling, and these stones*  
*Prove armed soldiers, ere her native king*  
Shall falter under foul rebellion's arms.   Act iii. Sc. 2.

This is a noble passage. Ten years later, when our poet produced *Julius Cæsar*, he had recourse again to the same image, and gave effect to it in a strain which nothing can surpass. The reader will know that I am referring to the speech of Antony, delivered by permission of Brutus and the other conspirators, over the body which they had stabbed to death :—

*Antony.* I have neither wit,\* nor words, nor worth,  
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,  
To stir men's blood : I only speak right on ;  
I tell you that which you yourselves do know :  
Show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor, poor dumb mouths,  
And bid them speak for me. But were I Brutus,  
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony  
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue  
In every wound of Cæsar, that would move  
*The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.*                     Act ii. Sc. 2.

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\* Malone reads 'writ,' which Johnson defends, not, I think, satisfactorily.

7. As there are ‘thoughts which lie too deep for tears,’ so there have been stages of human existence in which even desire for sympathy has become extinct; and nothing has seemed left to those whose hope was thus overclouded, but to wish that they had never been. This state of feeling, to which no faithful Christian should allow himself to be reduced, finds vent in expressions, the appalling sublimity of which has never been surpassed, in the 3rd chapter of the Book of Job:—

After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.

And Job spake and said :

Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man-child\* conceived.

Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.

Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let † the blackness of the day terrify it.

As for that night, let darkness seize upon it, let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months.

Lo! let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein.

Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day.

I believe the readers of Shakspeare will agree with me that there is no one of all his characters from whom language of this kind would be more expected, or come with greater propriety, than from the Lady Constance in *King John*. And so we find

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\* See above, p. 38.

† But see margin.

that he has put into her mouth a speech which I cannot doubt was founded upon the poet's recollection of the foregoing passage of the Old Testament. When King Philip had announced that the marriage was agreed on between his son Lewis and the Lady Blanch, whereby young Arthur, the son of Constance, was to be excluded from succession to the English throne—speaking of the contract as one that would ever reflect lustre upon the day then present, upon which it had been made—

The yearly course, that brings this day about,  
Shall never see it but a holyday ;—

Constance broke in upon him, thus :—

A wicked day, and not a holyday !  
What hath this day deserved ? What hath it done,  
That it in golden letters should be set,  
Among the high tides,\* in the kalendar ?  
Nay, rather, turn this day out of the week,  
This day of shame, oppression, perjury ;  
Or, if it must stand still, let wives with child  
Pray that their burdens may not fall this day.

Act iii. Sc. i.

And in *Hamlet*, written, according to Malone, in the same year as *King John*, viz. 1596, we find the sentiment of Job very nearly adopted, when he says to Ophelia, speaking of himself :—

I could accuse me of such things that it were better† my mother  
bad not borne me.

Act iii. Sc. i.

\* Times, seasons.

† See Matt. xxvi. 24.

To these passages may be added, from *Timon of Athens*, the last words spoken by Timon, as he goes out to put an end to his existence :—

*Sun, bide thy beams ! Timon hath done his reign.*

Act v. Sc. 2.

8. The striking sublimity with which Paul, when brought before Festus, replied to the Governor's exclamation that 'he was beside himself,' by the simple denial, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus,' Acts xxvi. 25, was not likely to be lost upon our poet's imagination. In both the plays which I just now mentioned as contemporaneous, *Hamlet* and *Ling John*, it is copied with good effect. When the Queen accuses Hamlet, after the exit of the Ghost, which he had seen, of 'ecstacy,' he answers :—

*Ecstacy !*

*My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music : It is not madness  
That I have uttered.*

Act iii. Sc. 4.

so, too, when the Cardinal Pandulph says to Constance :—

Lady, you utter madness, and not sorrow :  
Her reply is :—

'Thou art not holy to belie me so ;  
*I am not mad :* this hair I tear is mine ;  
My name is Constance ; I was Geffrey's wife ;  
Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost —  
*I am not mad : I would to heaven I were !*

Act iii. Sc. 4.

9. The mention of S. Paul may remind us of another sublime passage in the writings of that Apostle, which appears to have been present to the mind of Shakspeare. I allude to the verse in the Epistle to the Galatians, i. 8 :—

Though we, or an *angel from heaven*, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Compare with this text what we read in *King John*, in that most affecting of all scenes, between Hubert and Arthur, when the young Prince says to him :—

An\* if an angel should have come to me  
And told me, Hubert should put out mine eyes,  
I would not have believed him.      Act iv. Sc. i.

Akin, in some degree, to the foregoing, are two remarkable passages in the *First Part of King*  
*Henry IV*. The former of these has



*as derived from the Bible.*      323

We may be sure that Shakspeare had never seen the passage of Euripides which has been produced to justify and explain the so-called ‘bombast’ of these lines : and we may be no less certain that he *had seen and studied* those two grand chapters of Deuteronomy, and of the Epistle to the Romans, in which we read what I proceed to quote :—

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not *in Heaven*, that thou shouldst say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and *bring it unto us*, that we may hear it, and do it ? Neither is it *beyond the sea*, that thou shouldst say, who shall go over the sea for us, and *bring it unto us*, that we may hear it and do it ? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.      Deut. xxx. 11-14.

The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise : Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven ? that is, *to bring Christ down from above*. Or, who shall descend into the deep ? that is, *to bring up Christ again from the dead* : But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is, the word of faith, which we preach.

Romans x. 6-8.

In the other passage of the same play, to which I last referred, we may also trace a similar use and adaptation of Scriptural ideas and modes of thought. In this instance, for a reason that will be obvious, let us take the Scripture first.

In Job xxi. 22, the solemn question is asked :—

Shall any teach God knowledge ?

And in Isaiah xl. 13 :—

Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught Him ?

And in S. Paul, more than once, see Rom. xi. 34,  
1 Cor. ii. 16 :—

Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor ?

So when Owen Glendower desires to represent that he is something more than human—

All the courses of my life do show  
I am not in the roll of common men—  
he endeavours to fortify the boast by making use  
of the same image and attribute of Deity :—

Where is he living . . . .  
Which *calls me pupil*, or hath read to me ?  
And bring him out, that is but woman's son,  
Can trace me in the tedious ways of art,  
And hold me pace in deep experiments ?

Act iii. Sc. 1.

10. Again: the sublime passages of the Old Testament, in which the attributes of man, or of angels, are assigned to Almighty God ;—as, for instance, where He is said to ‘ride upon the heavens,’ Deut. xxxiii. 26, Ps. lxviii. 4 ; or ‘to walk’ or ‘fly upon the wings of the wind,’ Ps. civ. 3, xviii. 10 ; or that ‘His hand is not shortened,’ Numb. xi. 23, Isai. l. 2, lix. 1 ;—might expect to find their likenesses in Shakspeare, and they do find them : yet so softened and disguised, that no comparison which might suggest thoughts of irreverence is provoked by the imitation.

t is Romeo who thus, from Capulet's garden, addresses Juliet at her window :—

O ! speak again, bright angel, for thou art  
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,  
As is a winged messenger of Heaven  
Unto the white upturned wondering eyes  
Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,  
When he *bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,*  
And sails upon the bosom of the air.      Act ii. Sc. 2.

The shortening of the hand or arm is applied as a metaphor to Danger, with great force and propriety, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, part of which, at least, like to have been written by Shakspeare when young man.

Danger, which I feared, is at Antioch,  
Whose *arm seems far too short to bit me bere.*  
Act i. Sc 2.

Moreover, I suspect that our poet had in his eye the beautiful and most pathetic passage of the prophet Isaiah, in which God's unfailing remembrance of his people is set forth, xlix. 15—

Can a woman forget her sucking child ? . . . Yea, they forget, yet will *I* not forget thee ;—

Then he wrote, in *King Henry V.*, that well-known speech of the king on the eve of the victory at Agincourt :—

This day is called the feast of Crispian.  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named ;  
•      •      •      •      •

*Old men forget, yea, all shall be forgot,  
But we'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day.*

Act iv. Sc. 3.

I may observe that, in the received text of this passage, the reading is ‘*yet* all shall be forgot;’ but with the parallel words of Isaiah before me, I had no doubt that the true reading is ‘*yea*’ instead of ‘*yet*:’ and I have since discovered that the same conjecture had occurred to Malone, though he makes no mention of the confirmation given to it by the turn of expression which the inspired prophet employs.

11. The reader who desires further illustrations under this head is requested to compare the fine description in *King Richard II.* of deeds of darkness shrinking and terrified at the return of day—

*Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,  
The cloak of night being plucked from off their backs,  
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves ;—*

Act iii. Sc. 2.

with the similar description in the Book of Job :—

In the dark they dig thro’ houses ; . . . they know not the light ; for the morning is to them even as the shadow of death : if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

xxiv. 13-17.

It is in full accordance with the dread of light and of the day, which all wickedness is wont to

feel, that Lady Macbeth, when first meditating the murder of King Duncan, thus soliloquises :—

Come, thick night!  
And pall thee in the dullest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes ;  
Nor heaven peep thro' the blanket of the dark,  
To cry, *bold, bold.*      *Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 5.*

I may also mention—what Malone has noticed—that the imprecation of Joan of Arc, when led to execution, in *King Henry VI. Part 1st,*

*May darkness and the gloomy shade of death  
Environ you!*      *Act v. Sc. 4.*

is plainly derived from S. Luke i. 79.

Again, the grand passage in the *Third Part of King Henry VI.*, where the Earl of Warwick compares his own fall to that of the cedar,

*Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle,  
Under whose shade the ramping lion slept ;*  
*Act v. Sc. 2.*

was doubtless derived, as is pointed out in a note of Steevens, from the prophet Ezekiel, who had made a similar comparison between the fall of the glory of Assyria and of a cedar in Lebanon :—

All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young ; under his shadow dwelt all great nations.      *xxxii. 6.*

12. The following may be added as specimens of less elaborate comparison, no less evidently drawn from the same sacred source.



In *Much ado about nothing*, Benedick says to Don Pedro, in answer to the latter's question, 'Where's the count?'—

I found him here as melancholy as *a lodge in a warren*;—  
Act ii. Sc. i.

where again the note of Steevens very properly refers us to the parallel in Isaiah:—

The daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a  
lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city;— i. 8.

a melancholy picture of loneliness and desolation.

In *Hamlet*, Polonius warns Ophelia not to trust "too readily to the advances of the young prince, however accompanied with protestations of affection :

And again, in the *First Part of King Henry IV.* the same image occurs to describe the companions of the sovereign whom Henry had supplanted:—

The skipping king, he ambled up and down,  
With shallow jesters, and rash bavin wits,  
*Soon kindled and soon burnt.*                           Act iii. Sc. 2.

'Bavin' means *brushwood*. In like manner David, in Psalm cxviii. 12, says of his enemies:—

*They are extinct, even as the fire among the thorns; for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.*

In *King Richard III.* the resemblance of one who trusts in man to 'a drunken sailor upon a

nast,' quoted above, p. 168, appears to have been suggested by Proverbs xxiii. 34; and in *King Henry VIII.*, where the Duke of Norfolk complains of the exorbitant power of Wolsey—

All men's honors  
Lie like one lump before him, to be fashioned  
Into what pitch he please— Act ii. Sc. 2.

we are reminded of the image used by S. Paul in Romans ix. 21.

In *Othello*, the Moor speaks of Desdemona, we know how unjustly, as having been 'false as water,' Act v. Sc. 1. Was this simile derived from the character given by Jacob to his first-born son Reuben?

**Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.** Gen. xlix. 4.

The comparison ‘as snow in harvest’ occurs verbatim both in the Bible and in Shakspeare; but in the former it is applied to what is pleasant and refreshing, as might be expected from a writer in the East—

*As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him; for he refresheth the soul of his masters:—* Prov. xxv. 13.

while in the latter, as was also to be expected from one writing in this country, it is applied in a precisely opposite manner :—

*Clarence.* O do not slander him, for he is kind.

*1st Murderer.* Right, as snow in harvest.—Come, you deceive yourself:



'Tis he that sends us to destroy you here.

King Richard III. Act i. Sc. 4

In *Timon of Athens*, the painter says to the poet, speaking of Timon:—

You shall see him *a palm* in Athens again, and flourish with  
the highest. Act v. Sc. i.

The notion of 'flourishing like a palm tree' is one with which we are familiar from Psalm xcii. 12.

The difficulty of distinguishing, or rather the impossibility of separating the bad from the good in this world, as set forth in our Lord's parable of the wheat and the tares, Matt. xiii. 29, appears to have suggested to our poet the metaphorical language which he uses in the following lines:—

His foes are so enrooted with his friends,  
That, plucking to unfix an enemy,  
He doth unfasten so and shake a friend.

*King Henry IV. Part 2, Act iv. Sc. 1.*

13. In like manner the comparisons derived from animals, with which the Bible has familiarized us, are to be found no less in the pages of Shakspeare. For instance, in the last-named play, the description of the hostile approach of Alcibiades,

*Who, like a boar too savage, doth root up*

is derived from the Psalmist's description of the enemies of Jerusalem represented as a vine :—

The wild boar out of the wood doth root it up; and the wild beasts of the field devour it.

Ps. lxxx. 13, Prayer Book version.

So, too, ‘the wolf in sheep’s clothing’ of S. Matthew vii. 15, is reproduced in *Second Part of King Henry VI.* Act iii. Sc. 1, where Queen Margaret enquires concerning Gloster:

Is he a lamb? his skin is surely lent him,  
For he’s inclined as are the ravenous wolves.

The Leviathan, as described in Job xli., furnishes our poet with a striking passage in *King Henry V.* :—

We may as bootless spend our vain command  
Upon the enraged soldiers in their spoil  
*As send precepts to the Leviathan*  
*To come asbore.*

Act iii. Sc. 3.

That the leopard should change his spots is a Scriptural emblem of a thing least to be expected; see Jerem. xiii. 23. Compare *Richard II.* :—

K. Ricb. Give me his gage.—Lions make *leopards* tame.  
Norfolk. Yea, but *not change his spots.*

Act i. Sc. 1.

The ‘dog returning to his vomit,’ of S. Peter, 2 Ep. ii. 22, and of Proverbs xxvi. 11, is turned to account in *King Henry IV. 2nd Part*, Act i. Sc. 3 (where Mr. Bowdler, in omitting the allusion, has curtailed the passage in a manner singularly awkward and scarcely grammatical), and again (though still\* not in Mr. Bowdler’s edition) in *King Henry V.* Act iii. Sc. 7, where the text of S. Peter is given

\* This is mentioned not to complain of the omission in the present instance, but for the information of readers of that edition.

in French, almost exactly from the Genevan Bible of 1588 : a fact which renders one part, at least, of Dr. Farmer's conclusion in his celebrated essay very improbable, viz. that 'Shakspeare did not understand very common words in the *French* and Latin languages.'

The 'deaf adder' has been already spoken of, see above, p. 52.

The cherished 'Serpent, that, at the last, biteth and stingeth,' of Proverbs xxiii. 32, is reproduced in *King Henry VI. 2nd Part*, Act iii. Sc. 1 :—

I fear me, you but warm the starved *snake*,  
Who, cherished in your breasts, will *sting your hearts*.

And as we are 'set to school to the ant' in Proverbs vi. 6, xxx. 25, so are we also in *King Lear*, Act ii. Sc. 4.

14. Again, the metaphorical images of 'the axe laid to the root of the tree ;' of causing our 'light to shine before men,' in this naughty world ; of 'the cheek to be given to the smiter ;' of 'the mote' in the mind's 'eye,' and again of the mote and the beam ;—each of them well known to us from the Bible—have been all pressed into service by our great poet : as may be seen by any one who will read *Third Part Henry VI. Act ii. Sc. 2*; *Merchant of Venice*, Act v. Sc. 1; *King Lear*, Act iv. Sc. 1; *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 1; *Love's Labour's lost*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

But the field of Scriptural metaphor is one over

which we must track our poet still further. In the Bible, life is ‘a pilgrimage,’ Gen. xlvi. 9, and elsewhere ; so it is in Shakspeare :—

His time is spent, our *pilgrimage* must be.

*K. Richard II.* Act ii. Sc. 1.

See also *As you like it*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

In the Bible, the human body is ‘a temple,’ John ii. 21, and elsewhere ; so it is in Shakspeare :—

Nature, crescent, does not grow alone

In thews and bulk, but, as *this temple* waxes,

The inward service of the mind and soul

Grows wide withal.

*Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 3.

See also *Macbeth*, quoted above, p. 284.

In the Bible, that which infects and corrupts others is ‘leaven,’ 1 Cor. v. 6–8, and elsewhere ; so it is in Shakspeare :—

Thou, Posthumus,

Wilt lay the *leaven* on all proper \* men ;

Goodly and valiant shall be false and perjured

From thy great fall ;— *Cymbeline*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

i. e. shall not escape the imputation and character of being such.

In the Bible, that which is appropriated and secured, is ‘sealed,’ Rom. xv. 28, and elsewhere ; so it is in Shakspeare :—

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,

And could of men distinguish her election,

She hath *sealed thee* for herself.

Act iii. Sc. 2.

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\* See above, p. 40. But here ‘proper’ seems to mean *handsome morally* and *inwardly*, like the Greek *καλός*.

So says Hamlet to his friend Horatio ; and, again, the same play, the phrase which S. John uses, iii. 33, is adopted by our poet :—

A combination and a form indeed,  
Where every god did seem to set his seal,  
*To give the world assurance of a man;*  
This was your husband.

Act iii. Sc. 4.

In the Bible we read of ‘the bowels,’ i. e. the mercy, ‘of the Lord ;’ so in Shakspeare, *King Henry V.* Act ii. Sc. 4.

15. But further ; besides the broader and more important principles and sentiments treated of at large in the preceding chapter, we may notice here several minor instances in which Shakspeare has adapted the moral axioms of Scripture to his purposes as a dramatic poet. A remarkable example of this, and one which might be illustrated by a whole cento of Bible texts, as including references not only to Scriptural maxims, but to facts, is to be found in *All's well that ends well* :—

He that of greatest works is finisher,  
*Oft does them by the weakest minister :*  
So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown,  
When judges have been babes : great floods have flown  
From simple sources ; and great seas have dried,  
When miracles have by the greatest been denied.  
*Oft expectation fails, and most oft there*  
*Where most it promises ; and oft it bits*  
*Where hope is coldest, and despair most sits.*

Act ii. Sc. 1.

Here Mr. Malone has properly pointed out both

the resemblance to the words of S. Paul, ‘God hath chosen,’ i. e. is wont to choose, ‘the *weak things* of the world to confound the things which are mighty,’ 1 Cor. i. 27; and the direct allusion to the words of our Lord :—

I thank Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Matt. xi. 25.

But in the latter case it would have been more appropriate to have quoted Matt. xxi. 15, 16, concerning the reference to Psalm viii. 2; because in that passage ‘the judgment’ of the children in the temple, as contrasted with the unbelief of the chief priests and scribes, is actually ‘shown.’ Mr. Holt White suggests that the allusion is to Daniel’s vision, when ‘a young youth,’ the two elders in the story of Susannah. I have remarked that Shakspeare had this story in view on another\* occasion; but I doubt whether he would have spoken of an apocryphal book as ‘holy writ;’ though some of the fathers, and our own Homilies (using the word ‘Scripture’ in a laxer sense than prevailed in Shakspeare’s time, or prevails now) did so speak. Returning to the speech of Helena in *All’s well*, &c., both the critic just named and Mr. Henley, we observed that in the words ‘great floods have flown from simple sources,’ there is an allusion to Moses smiting the rock in Horeb, Exod. xvii. 6:

\* See above, p. 87.



but they differ about the allusion in the verse that follows: the former considers that by 'the greatest' we are to understand Pharaoh, who 'denied,' or would *not hearken to* the miracles of Moses in Egypt; the latter, that the elders of Israel are meant, who, notwithstanding the miracles wrought for their preservation, refused that compliance which they ought to have yielded. Both critics suppose that the preceding half line refers to the drying up of the Red Sea.

Another example of the same kind is the poetical expansion which Shakspeare gives to the Scriptural notion, that it is the duty of men, in the moral, no less than in the natural world, to 'discern the signs of the times.' See Matt. xvi. 1-3, and elsewhere. I allude to the dialogue in *King Richard III.*\* between certain citizens of London, when they received news of the death of King Edward IV.

*1st Cit.* Come, come, we fear the worst; all will be well.

*3rd Cit.* When clouds are seen, wise men put on their cloaks;  
When great leaves fall, then winter is at hand;  
When the sun sets, who does not look for night?  
Untimely storms make men expect a dearth:  
All may be well; but, if God sort it so,  
'Tis more than we deserve, or I expect.

*2nd Cit.* Truly the hearts of men are full of fear ;  
You cannot reason almost with a man  
That looks not heavily, and full of dread. A

Act ii. Sc. 3

\* See also *King Richard II.* Act iii. Sc. 2.

† Converse, talk.



*3rd Cit.* Before the days of change, still is it so ;  
By a divine instinct, men's minds mistrust  
Ensuing danger ; as, by proof, we see  
The water swell before a boisterous storm.      Act ii. Sc. 3.

Take, again, the following argument from the Gospel :—

What king [said our Lord] going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand ? or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

Luke xiv. 31, 32.

With what force and beauty is this argument—this illustration of the duty of counting the cost when we enter upon our Christian warfare—applied by our poet to an individual case, in the *Second Part of King Henry IV.*, where Morton expostulates with the Duke of Northumberland, who, upon hearing of the death of his son, Harry Percy, gave way to overwhelming passion at a moment when there was most need for instant and effectual counsel !—

You cast the event of war, my noble lord,  
And summed the account of chance, before you said—  
Let us make head. It was your presurmise,  
That in the dole of blows, your son might drop :  
You knew he walk'd o'er perils, on an edge,  
More likely to fall in, than to get o'er :  
You were advis'd his flesh was capable  
Of wounds and scars ; and that his forward spirit  
Would lift him where most trade of danger ranged ;  
Yet did you say—Go forth ; and none of this,  
Though strongly apprehended, could restrain



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The stiff-born action : What hath then befallen,  
Or what hath this bold enterprise brought forth,  
More than that \* being which was like to be?

Act i. Sc. 1.

But there was another illustration to the same effect, in that discourse of Christ :—

Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build and was not able to finish.

Luke xiv. 28, 29.

And this, too, our poet has appropriated (and at the same time, luxuriates, rather too much, perhaps, in the amplification he has given it) in a subsequent scene of the same play. Lord Bardolph is speaking in consultation with the Archbishop of York, Lords Mowbray and Hastings, all enemies of the King, and in discouragement of their enterprise :—

The question, then, Lord Hastings, standeth thus ;—  
Whether our present five-and-twenty thousand  
May hold up head, without Northumberland?

and his ‘judgment,’ that in the mean time, at all events, they ‘should not step too far’ into open rebellion, is thus maintained :—

When we mean to build,  
We first survey the plot, then draw the model ;  
And when we see the figure of the house,

\* State of things, result, consequence.



Then must we rate the cost of the erection :  
Which if we find outweighs ability,  
What do we then but draw anew the model  
In fewer offices ; or, at least, desist  
To build at all ? Much more in this great work  
(Which is almost to pluck a kingdom down,  
And set another up) should we survey  
The plot of situation and the model ;  
Consent upon a sure foundation ;  
Question surveyors ; know our own estate,  
How able such a work to undergo,  
To weigh against his opposite : or else,  
We fortify in paper and in figures,  
Using the names of men instead of men ;  
Like one that draws the model of a house  
Beyond his power to build it ; who, half through,  
*Gives o'er, and leaves his part-created cost*  
*A naked subject to the weeping clouds,*  
*And waste for churlish winter's tyranny.*

Act i. Sc. 3.

One more example of the same class may be found by comparing the sentiment of Ecclesiastes x. 1, ‘Dead flies, &c.,’ with the expansion given to it in *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 4.

So, oft it chances in particular men, &c.  
viz. that a failing in one particular destroys their  
‘reputation for wisdom.’

16. Of Scriptural proverbs adopted by our poet, we may note the following :—

The tree is known by its fruits ;      Luke vi. 44.  
see *King Henry IV. First Part*, Act ii. Sc. 4,  
where Falstaff says,

If the tree may be known by the fruit, &c.

He that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him ;  
 Prov. xxvi. 27.

see *King Henry VIII.*, quoted above, p. 157.

The full soul loatheth an honeycomb ;  
 Prov. xxvii. 7.

see *King Henry IV. First Part*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion ;  
 Prov. xx. 2.

see the last-named play, Act iii. Sc. 3.

He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled therewith ;  
 Eccl. xiii. 1.

see the same play, Act ii. Sc. 4.

When Touchstone, in *As you like it*, says—

I do now remember a saying, *The fool doth think he is wise,*  
*but the wise man knows he is a fool* ;—                   Act v. Sc. 1.

is the ‘saying’ he there quotes derived from  
 1 Cor. iii. 18 ?

The well-known apologue of Menenius Agrippa  
 in our poet’s play of *Coriolanus*, Act i. Sc. 1, is not  
 to be traced to S. Paul’s First Epistle to the Cor-  
 inthians, c. xii., but rather to the common source  
 in Roman history, from which they both, we may  
 suppose, adopted it ; except that S. Paul probably  
 read it in Livy, and Shakspeare in North’s trans-  
 lation of Plutarch. But when, in the *Third Part*  
 of *King Henry VI.*, the Earl of Warwick says to  
 Richard Plantagenet—

Victorious Prince of York,  
 Before I see thee seated in that throne,



*as derived from the B.<sup>n</sup>.*

Which now the house of Lancaster bears.

I vow by heaven on a grove and on a wood —

*and so forth.*

and when, again, in *First Part of King Henry IV.*  
Act i. Sc. 2, Prince Henry says to Fluellen —

Wisdom crieth out in the street, and in the highest place —  
we need not doubt that our poet had in view a  
resolution of King David. Ps. cxviii. 11, in the  
former case, and a complaint of King Solomon,  
Prov. i. 20, in the latter.

The notion of expressing silence by laying the  
finger on the lips, or hand upon the mouth, which  
we find in *Othello*, Act ii. Sc. 1, and in *Troilus and  
Cressida*, Act iii. Sc. 3, is also, probably, of Scriptural  
origin; see Judges xviii. 19, and the re-  
ferences given there in the margin.

The same may be said of the adoption, by  
Shakspeare, of the true prophetical style, whereby  
that which is foretold is said to be actually brought  
to pass and accomplished by him who predicts it.  
Thus, Macbeth, speaking of the prophecy of the  
Witches in his favour, complains —

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,

And put a barren sceptre in my gripe; Act iii. Sc. 1.

just as the chief butler of Pharaoh, in telling  
how Joseph had interpreted his dream, and the  
dream of the chief baker, describes what he had  
spoken in these words : —

Me he restored unto my office, and him he banish'd.

*Cant. i. 10. 13.*

See also Jerem. i. 10, Ezek. xliii. 3, and elsewhere.  
The Roman poet Persius uses the same style:—

Spem macram, supplice voto,  
Nunc Licini in campos, nunc Crassi mittit in ædes.

I will only notice further, that a figure of speech of which S. Paul is fond, is also to be met with very frequently in Shakspeare; I mean the figure which grammarians have called *Oxymoron*. Of Scriptural examples it may suffice to refer to that sublime passage in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, which ends thus—‘as having nothing and [yet] possessing all things,’ vi. 10. The following may be accepted as a sample of parallel instances to be found in our poet:—

Fairest Cordelia, thou art *most rich, being poor;*  
*Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised.*

*K. Lear, Act i. Sc. 1.*

Compare the Duke’s speech in *Measure for Measure*, quoted above, p. 148.

My long sickness  
Of health and living now begins to mend,  
And *nothing* brings me *all things.*

*Timon of Athens, Act v. Sc. 2.*

So, too, we have in *Cymbeline*, iv. 3:—

Wherein I am false, I am honest;

with which we may compare S. Paul, in the passage of the Bible last referred to, ‘as deceivers and [yet] true.’

Of the same character are the lines in the

*Merchant of Venice*, which Gratiano addresses to Antonio ;—

You have too much respect upon the world;  
*They lose it that do buy it with much care.*

Act i. Sc. 1.

And in *Measure for Measure*, where Claudio says in answer to the exhortations of the disguised Duke ;—

To sue to live, I find I seek to die,  
And seeking death, find life :                  Act iii. Sc. 1.

both which passages appear to be founded upon the words of our Lord, recorded by S. Matthew, xvi. 25, ‘ Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.’

Ben Jonson, in his *Discoveries* (see *Works*, vol. ix. p. 175) condemns as ‘ ridiculous ’ our poet’s line, as it stood in the first copy of *Julius Cæsar*, Act iii. Sc. 1 :—

Know, Cæsar doth not wrong, but with just cause.

It is, however, easily defensible, no less than the foregoing quotations from S. Paul and from our Lord Himself will be readily defended not only by a reverent, but a sound and judicious criticism.





INTERIOR OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL.



## CONCLUSION.

**H**AVE now gone through the interesting and instructive task which I proposed to myself; and the conclusion at which I have arrived is this:—Take the entire range of English Literature; put together our best authors, who have written upon subjects not professedly religious or theological, and we shall not find, I believe, in them *all united*, so much evidence of the Bible having been read and used, as we have found in Shakspeare *alone*. This is a *phenomenon* which admits of being looked at from several points of view; but I shall be content to regard it solely in connection with the undoubted fact, that of all our authors, Shakspeare is also, by general confession, the greatest and the best. According to the testimony of Charles Lamb, a most competent judge in regard to all the literary elements of the question, our poet, ‘in his divine mind and manners, surpassed not only the great men his contem-

poraries, but all mankind.\* Yes; and claiming for him this superiority over his contemporaries, I cannot but remark that, while most of the great laymen of that great Elizabethan age—Lord Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, the poet Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Burleigh, Ben Jonson—have paid homage to Christianity, if not always in their practice, yet in the convictions of their understanding, and in the profession of their faith, none of them has done this so fully or so effectually as Shakspeare.

But I may go further. Not a little remarkable is it that those only have disputed the superior merit and excellency of our poet who have also denied the value and authority of Holy Scripture. The disparagement of such judges—I allude especially to Voltaire and David Hume—is an additional confirmation of the otherwise unanimous panegyric with which he has been honoured. It will appear scarcely credible at the present day that the accepted *Historian of England*, in speaking of England's greatest poet, should have given vent to criticisms such as these:—

A striking peculiarity of sentiment . . . Shakspeare frequently hits; *a reasonable propriety of thought be cannot for any time upbold*. . . . It is in vain we look [in him] for either purity or simplicity of diction. . . . Both he and Ben Jonson were equally deficient in taste and elegance, in harmony and correctness. . . . The English theatre has ever since taken a strong tincture of Shakspeare; and *thence it has proceeded that the*

\* *Specimens of Dramatic Poets*, Preface, vol. i. p. 7.

*nation has undergone from all its neighbours THE REPROACH OF BARBARISM*, from which its valuable productions in some other parts of learning would otherwise have exempted it.\*

The author of these remarks upon Shakspeare has himself informed us that the volume which contained them, when first published, so far from being popular, was received ‘with one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation,’ on account of its political views: nor, if the rest of its contents had been equally erroneous with the passage which I have quoted, would it have deserved any better reception. And how did Hume console himself under the disappointment? He proceeded to write his *Natural History of Religion*, in which he gave the world to understand that, as he had looked in vain, in Shakspeare, for *purity or simplicity of diction, for taste or elegance, for harmony or correctness*, so he had been unable to derive anything but ‘doubt, uncertainty, and suspense of judgment,’ from the written Word of God! The concluding remark of the passage quoted above, in which Shakspeare and Ben Jonson are accused of having brought upon us ‘as a nation the reproach of barbarism from *all our neighbours*,’ is evidently founded upon the strictures of Voltaire,† who, not long before, had characterised our poet as ‘a writer

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\* Hume’s *Hist. of England*, Appendix to Reign of James I.

† All that can be said in *excuse* for Voltaire’s criticism has been fairly stated by Mr. C. Knight, in his *Studies of Shakspeare*, p. 540, sq.

of monstrous Farces, called by him Tragedies,' had pronounced *Hamlet* to be 'the work of a drunken savage,'\* and had attributed 'barbarism and ignorance' to the nation by which he was admired! What the same French author also thought and wrote of divine Revelation, and of the profession of Christianity, need not be told.

The best answer to this latter critic has been given by another foreigner—not a Frenchman, but a German—Augustus William Schlegel, who has shown an admirable appreciation of the genius and characteristic excellencies of our great poet in his masterly *Lectures on Dramatic Literature* :—

Shakspeare is the pride of his nation. . . . He was the idol of his contemporaries; and after the interval of Puritanical fanaticism . . . his fame began to revive with more than its original brightness towards the beginning of the last century, and since that period it has increased with the progress of time: and for centuries to come, I speak with the greatest confidence, it will continue to gather strength like an alpine avalanche, at every period of its descent. . . . In general, Shakspeare's style yet remains the very best model both in the vigorous and sublime, and in the pleasing and tender.—Vol. ii. p. 102, sq. and p. 146.

To the criticism of Hume, which first appeared in 1764—exactly a century ago—the best reply will be the Tercentenary Festival in honour of the poet's

\* Such criticism is not even yet quite extinct. An American writer has recently discovered that 'Shakspeare . . . and Walter Scott were remarkably morbid men; while Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth, . . . were undoubtedly insane!'—See *Quart. Rev.* Jan. 1864, p. 56.

birth, which our ‘barbarous nation’ is preparing to celebrate in the present year. Or, if we desire to see the very different opinion of another historian of England, and man of letters—a writer, moreover, who was no enthusiast, but cool and cautious in his judgments—it is Mr. Hallam who pronounces that ‘the name of Shakspeare is the greatest in our literature ; it is THE GREATEST IN ALL LITERATURE.’\*

Dr. Farmer, in his celebrated essay *Upon the Learning of Shakspeare*, arrived at the conclusion that our poet’s ‘studies were demonstratively confined to nature and his own language.’ To this conclusion (while I partly demur, as I have before intimated, to the narrow limits which it assigns to Shakspeare’s reading) I would presume to add that, of all the books which he studied in his own language, there was none with which he was more familiar than the English Bible. That the lower† characters in his plays have in every instance treated Holy Scripture with the nice and exact reverence which we should feel to be desirable at the present day, is

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\* *Hist. of Literature*, vol. iii. p. 547.

† Warburton has the following note upon *All's Well that ends Well*, Act iv. Sc. 5, with reference to the dialogue between the clown and Lafeu :—‘Shakspeare is but rarely guilty of such impious trash (?). And it is observable that then he always puts that into the mouth of his *fools*, which is now grown the characteristic of the *fine gentleman*.’ I add, not of his ‘fools’ only, but of his *madmen*. Compare Edgar in *King Lear*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

not to be maintained ; but still less is the charge which has been brought against him, of frequent irreverence and profaneness in his use of God's word, to be justified, or received. The mass of reference and allusion to Scripture which his works contain, must be looked at as a whole, in order to discover its true *animus*. This would be only just and fair to an author under any circumstances ; but how much more necessary and indispensable is it in our poet's case, when we know that his plays, for the most part, were not published by himself, nor till some years after his death ; and when we also know that into many of his scenes low jokes, for which he is not responsible, were foisted by the players in order to 'please the million.' For instance, Dr. Farmer considered it 'extremely probable' that the French ribaldry\* in the last scene of King Henry V. was at first inserted by a different hand ; as 'the many additions in that same play most certainly were, after he had left the stage.' In like manner the wretched jest (which we learn from other quarters to have been *current* in our poet's days), by which the name of the *Ten Commandments* was given to the fingers and thumbs of the two hands, has found its way into the *Second*

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\* We have only to compare the *names* of Shakspeare's plays with the *names* of those of the principal dramatists who were his contemporaries—Ford, Massinger, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Rowley, Shirley, and even Ben Jonson—in order to perceive the superior *delicacy* of our poet's mind for one living in that age.

*Part of King Henry VI.*; where Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester, says to Queen Margaret, in language as coarse as it is profane—but language, be it remembered, addressed to an adulteress by one whom she had grievously provoked by reflexions upon her husband, and, moreover, grossly insulted by *boxing her on the ear* :—

Could I come near your beauty with my nails,  
I'd set *my ten commandments in your face*.

Act i. Sc. 3.

The authenticity of this play has been called in question by good judges; for instance, by Dr. Farmer: though, for my own part, I must confess I agree with Schlegel, if not in accepting the whole as unquestionably Shakspeare's, yet in maintaining that some parts of it, especially the death-scene of Cardinal Beaufort, could have been written by no other hand. It is in the same play that another instance occurs of Scriptural reference, which certainly falls short of what we now feel to be due, in speaking upon so sacred and solemn a subject. Richard, son of the Duke of York, says to young Lord Clifford, who had called the Yorkists ‘rebels,’

Fye! charity, for shame! speak not in spite,  
For you shall *sup with Jesus Christ to-night* ;—

Act v. Sc. 1.

in ironical allusion, evidently, to the promise which our Lord made to the Penitent Thief upon the

Cross. However, I must repeat, that before we censure Shakspeare for verses such as these, justice requires us to have certain evidence that he actually wrote them ; which evidence cannot now be obtained : and I must add, that before we determine to withhold from him the high praise given to the poet Thomson by his friend and patron, Lord Lyttelton, viz. that in all his works there was not to be discovered

One line which dying he would wish to blot, charity would suggest to us to make the fullest allowance for the influence of causes\* which have unquestionably led, in many instances, to the injury and adulteration of our poet's text. And meanwhile, certain it is—as one who has deserved well of all lovers of Shakspeare, and of Shakspeare himself, has truly said—‘He flattered no bad passion, disguised no vice in the garb of virtue, trifled with no just and generous principle.’†

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\* For a full account of these causes, see, in the Variorum edition, vol. i. Pope's Preface, p. 12; Theobald's do. p. 32; Sir T. Hanmer's do. p. 44; Warburton's do. p. 46; Johnson's do. pp. 91, 196. In support of the author's own opinion as indicated above, the following twofold testimony may be quoted here: ‘Coleridge says rightly there is not one vicious passage in all Shakspeare.’—*Quart. Rev.* April 1864, p. 476. At the same time, I am inclined to suspect that our poet was thinking of himself when he made Don Pedro to describe Benedick as follows:—

*The man doth fear God*, however it seems not in him, by some large jests he will make.      *Much Ado, &c.* Act ii. Sc. 3.

† See Mrs. Jameson's *Characteristics of Women*, vol. i. p. 39.

the more jealous of any misconception upon point, because I have endeavoured in one, and the most considerable portion of the foregoing to exhibit Shakspeare as something more, and higher and better, than an incomparable poet. ‘We are apt,’ says Mrs. Montagu, in celebrated essay, ‘to consider Shakspeare only as a poet; but he is certainly one of the greatest philosophers that ever lived.’ And whence become such? I answer without hesitation, that, while he possessed the keenest natural power of observation; together with an unfailing gift of gentleness and love and universal sympathy, with his philosophy from the highest and purest source of moral truth. In like manner, Johnson served, that from the writings of Shakspeare, *walked through* life in all its relations, public and private, ‘a system of social duty may be selected.’ But it be too much to add, that from the same source may be gathered also no inconsiderable portion towards a full and accurate system of social doctrine? He himself, in his modesty, doubtless have been content to say of himself the Soothsayer in *Antony and Cleopatra*,

In Nature’s infinite book of secrecy

A little I can read.

Act i. Sc. 2.

, I trust, will not hesitate for the future to speak in his behalf, that God’s own ‘infinite Book’

of Grace and Truth had not been revealed to him in vain.

Before I drop altogether the subject upon which we have been engaged, I may mention a somewhat curious coincidence, of which the reader perhaps is not aware, between the outward form of the Holy Scriptures and a portion, at least, of the plays of Shakspeare. I allude to the fact, that originally the former were not divided into chapters and verses, nor the latter into acts and scenes. Our poet's plays were not improbably all written, as it is certain many of them were at first printed, in one unbroken continuity ; and it was not till the early part of the last century that Rowe and Pope, by introducing the present divisions and subdivisions, did for them, as a whole, what had been done by Hugo Cardinalis, in the thirteenth century, and by Rabbi Nathan, in the fifteenth, for the Books of the Old Testament (with the exception of the Book of Psalms, which had been originally divided as we now have it), and by Robert and Henry Stephens, in the sixteenth century, for the Books of the New Testament, by dividing them into chapters, and by prefixing to the verses the numbers which they now bear. And as the complaint has been frequently made, not without reason in some instances, that this division of the Bible, into chapters especially, while it has great advantages, is attended also with frequent inconvenience, and leads to misunder-

ling and misinterpretation of God's word ; so  
s been remarked by Shakspeare's greatest critic,  
his plays, instead of being broken up in the  
sentation, as they now are, 'ought to be ex-  
ed with short pauses interposed as often as the  
is changed, or any considerable time is allowed  
iss ;' and he adds, 'this method would at once  
a thousand absurdities.' Whether this ob-  
tion is a just one, I cannot tell : only, as editions  
e Bible have been called for, and published,  
h represent the Sacred Text printed con-  
nservatively in its original form, so it would, perhaps,  
esirable that the lovers of Shakspeare might  
the option, if not of seeing upon the stage his  
acted in the way which Dr. Johnson has  
ed out, yet of reading them in a popular  
on\* arranged upon that plan. But be this also  
may ; yet one opinion, at all events, I am  
ared to maintain. In whatever shape the  
ine plays of Shakspeare may be presented to  
here is nothing—nothing of a literary kind—  
which we have greater reason to thank the  
R OF ALL GOOD, than for a large proportion of  
works—excepting only the *Book of Common  
er,*† and THAT, which has imparted alike to it

---

\* The *fac simile* reprint of the first folio, now in course of pub-  
a, besides its value in other respects, forms an interesting con-  
on towards such a result.

† Confirmation of this high estimate of the *Prayer Book*, I may

and to them no small share of the surpassing excellence, which, though in very different ways, they both possess—**HIS OWN INCOMPARABLE, MOST HOLY, EVERLASTING WORD.**

---

be allowed to quote two authorities—one clerical and the other lay—not inferior, perhaps, upon a literary question, to any who have written in the English tongue :—

‘As to the greatest part of our liturgy, there seems to be in it as great strains of true sublime eloquence, as are anywhere to be found in our language.’—**DEAN SWIFT, *Works*, vol. ix. p. 152.**

‘That great model of chaste, lofty, and pathetic eloquence, the *Book of Common Prayer*.’—**LORD MACAULAY, *History*, vol. iii. p. 355.**

To these testimonies it may not be out of place to add here, what I have somewhere read, that the greatest *tragedian* of the age, when asked what was the noblest composition in the English language, replied, ‘The Burial Service of the Church of England.’



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